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THE NEWSPAPER FOR ASHFORD, TENTERDEN AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES



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PROPERTY...

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POLICE FIND CRACK DEN IN OAP FLATS

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Jason Conners was told to lose weight or he
would die within five years. Search 'weight'

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STEAMING BACK IN TIME

The little steam engine Knowle at the Kent & East Sussex Railway in Tenterden will be 130 years old this year. The locomotive began its career on the London to Brighton line and joined the Tenterden railway at the time of World War Two. It then ferried seasonal farm workers from London to the hop gardens of Kent.

EXCLUSIVE

BY ED HILL

HEROIN and crack cocaine has been seized in a raid at a sheltered housing block for the elderly in Ashford.

Police found large quantities of drugs at Oakleigh House, in Watercress Lane, on Thursday. The block is owned and managed by Ashford council.

Sergeant Phil Pryce, of the Neighbourhood Police Task Team, said: "We carried out the raid after complaints from residents about nuisance caused by people coming and going."

"There were large amounts of both crack and heroin on the premises. We also found a lot of property we suspect may have been stolen."

Three people were arrested inside the property, which is rented by residents who are more than 50 and usually infirm. Another person was arrested outside the building.

Police used sniffer dogs to find the drugs, which were hidden in a ground floor flat. Residents said people would hang around the block using mobile phones and would be let in by the occupants of the flat. Elderly tenants spoke of the nightmare caused by drug users in and around Oakleigh House.

One, who did not wish to be named, said: "We've put up with this for more than a year. Last night I was so frightened because there were about 13 or 14 of them hanging about. I was scared stiff, there was so much activity. The door just kept banging and banging."

Another tenant, Jean Joyce, said she was attacked in May, last year, when a man

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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1 A behind the scenes look at the county's plans for a £10 million library and archive centre. **Search 'archive'**



2 Julie Maddocks takes the Kent chef tour and visits the best of the county's local food producers. **Search 'food'**



3 Gills boss Mark Stimson talks about the weekend games ahead and catching up after the snow. **Search 'Gills'**

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Education for over-16s 'will be a priority'

■ BY ED HILL

THE head of South Kent College has promised post-16 education in Ashford will be a priority.

Monica Box, who was visiting the Jemmett Road campus last week, said despite economic pressures putting a halt on future building projects such as the Learning Centre, planned for a site near the station, it was recognised that the town needed to increase its skills base.

She said: "I think that particular project is not going to be realised in the way it had been originally thought of, but there is no doubt that in the future Ashford will have something different in terms of post-16 education, such as stronger links with a higher education body."

The college principle, who has been in charge for almost 18 months, said alternative sites such as Charter House could be used as a college or there would need to be a redesign of a new building.

She said: "We have now brought a group together with Ashford's Future to see how we can deliver capital projects for further education. Something will happen."

"There is a huge amount of energy in finding something for Ashford that matches the growth potential of the town."

Recent economic strategy reports carried out by Ashford council identified further education as an area where the town needs to improve what it offers young people so that they stay in the borough.

Ms Box said: "In economic terms it is always a key factor, and there is an overarching Government programme for this. Ashford will require more skill development investment."

She also said the proposed merger



PROMISE: Monica Box, and below, the design for the now scrapped Learning Centre



between South Kent College and West Kent College was likely to happen in April.

She said: "The West Kent governors will be hearing in the next week or so about the formula for funding support for the merger. The next stage will be a much closer partnership with West Kent."

"It sounds very positive at the moment. It has been a long process, particularly with public sector resources affected by the recession."

"The merger will require new investment so they have to be clear that what they get will be better than before. I am also sure that if the merger goes ahead, they will be keen to champion post-16 education."

Heroin seized from sheltered housing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
entered her flat, grabbed her handbag and dragged her down the corridor, fracturing her shoulder.

She told Yourashford: "I've lived in terror ever since."

Police say they will increase patrols in the area. Sgt Pryce is head of a team set up to deal with public concerns.

He said: "This is an unusual case given the location. We were surprised at the amount of drugs we found."

Chief Inspector John Frayne said: "Substances have been taken away and are being tested by experts. Detectives from Ashford are also questioning people."

Tracey Kerly, head of housing at Ashford council, said: "Drug misuse and criminal activity is not restricted to the under-50s."

"The council can apply to the courts to end a tenancy if there is sufficient evidence of a breach of rules."

Of the four arrested, one man was released without charge. The other three from Ashford, aged 57, 54 and 37 were released on bail until March 17.

Olympic cyclist picks up his club jersey

OLYMPIC gold medalist Jamie Staff was presented with his own Ashford Deraillours Cycling Club jersey last week.

The cycling sprinter has been the club's patron for some time and supports its activities, including dropping in on events and training sessions.

The Ashford Deraillours have just taken delivery of their new kit which they say will help make the club more recognisable at away events.

The club is open to youngsters aged 11 to 18, of all abilities. To find out how you can join visit www.ashford-derailours.co.uk

Collapsing chimney made stable by crew

FIRE crews had to deal with a chimney stack that was collapsing on the roof of a house in Godinton Road on Saturday.

They were called to the empty property at 10.45pm after a neighbour said they heard bricks falling from the roof.

It is thought the chimney had been damaged by the recent cold weather.

Fire crews made the structure stable using a long turntable ladder.

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'Robber was trying to kill me and my friends'

■ BY IAN READ

AN elite armed policeman has told an inquest how he had just three seconds to decide to shoot a robber dead in the street.

In October 2006 the officer, known only as Echo 19, came face to face with serial armed robber Robert Haines seconds after he'd raided a security van delivering to the Nationwide in New Romney High Street.

Haines, 43, lived with his wife and two children in Challock, just outside of Ashford.

As he escaped Haines fired his sawn-off shotgun at a police team – he was shot three times by Echo 19.

The officer told the Folkestone inquest into Haine's death how he spotted him wearing a balaclava with slits cut out of it. He was carrying £105,000 in cash and a sawn-off shotgun.

Armed with a high-velocity single shot machine gun, Echo 19 was leading the police team confronting the raiders.

He said: "I was running at a stoop. I felt very vulnerable. As I looked up I saw a huge shape silhouetted in the light coming towards me. I turned the torch on my gun on.

"He was a huge figure dressed in black. His face was covered in a black balaclava with eye-holes cut out so I could see the white flesh around his eyes. I thought 'that's a robber'.

"I shouted 'armed police'. It took me an instant to realise I was confronting an armed robber. I shouted as if my life depended on it."

The two men were running towards each



DEADLY WEAPON: A high-velocity Heckler and Koch G36 carbine machine gun similar to the one used to shoot armed robber Robert Haines, right.



other. Haines ran into a car park where a Mercedes getaway car was waiting. As Haines ran Echo 19 tracked him with his gun.

Echo 19 said: "He pirouetted round and brought the gun down. He was facing me. Then he turned and fired. He was trying to kill me and my friends.

"I raised my weapon and fired two shots. I aimed at the central mass of his body. I thought he was wearing body armour. I fired again. I had to remove the threat. I had to stop him shooting again."

Haines slumped to the floor and the officer shouted at him to show his hands. When he didn't, he kicked him in the stomach. The gunman was shot in the side, the chest and the back.

Echo 19 told the inquest: "I offered him the chance to surrender."

Colleague Echo 10 told how he saw Haines trying to crawl away. He fired a taser gun at him but it didn't penetrate the robber's thick clothing. When he realised the robber might be

mortally wounded he gave first aid.

The team of Flying Squad and Metropolitan Police marksmen had been tracking Haines and his three-man gun gang for months and lay in wait on the day of the robbery.

Echo 19 told the court how other officers saw Haines ambush a security van delivering cash. From their hidden observation post the four men heard the words "shotgun, balaclava, attack! attack! attack!"

Echo 19 was armed with a police issue Heckler and Koch G36 carbine, a police issue machine gun which fires single shot high-velocity bullets. Echo 19 told the inquest he also had a pistol and stun grenades on him.

He told the inquest: "We needed the high-velocity carbine because we were finding criminals were better armed than we were."

He also revealed that in the back of his mind was the memory of a friend shot by a robber with a sawn-off who was lucky to survive.

The case continues.

£3.4m boost for affordable homes plan

THE Government is to grant Ashford £3.4 million towards affordable homes.

Ashford council successfully bid for the cash from the Local Authority New Build programme, managed by the Government's Homes and Communities Agency.

Last September the council was awarded £1.7 million to build 25 homes. The latest cash injection means this number will increase to 80.

All the homes are planned for small brownfield sites on land already owned by the council in areas such as Kennington and Willesborough and villages including Biddenden and Great Chart.

Ashford is one of the few councils in the South East to begin building social housing again after the introduction of new rules which allow councils some financial freedom. It hopes the building can start as early as March.

Cllr Peter Wood, portfolio holder for housing and property, said: "With an increasing population it is now more important than ever to be providing further affordable housing in our borough.

"Our intention is to make the best use of sites we already have, bringing them back into use but at the same time ensuring this is done in a way which complements what is already there and carried out in a way which reflects the needs of our diverse communities.

Tracey Kerly, head of housing added: "Our successful funding bids show the confidence ministers have in this council's housing service and our ability to provide much needed, good quality homes for local families efficiently and cost effectively."

Homes plan 'a threat to school farm'

PROPOSALS to build 25 homes on land at the North School have been heavily criticised by the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

The group says the plans are a threat to the school's much-loved farm.

Sean Furey, deputy director of the group's county branch Protect Kent, said: "We believe The North School farm is of vital importance and an increasingly rare resource. It not only supports many parts of the school's curriculum but also plays a vital role in Kent's rural economy and society."

The application is being made by Kent County Council, which owns the land. It recently carried out a refurbishment of the school as part of a private finance initiative.

Parents and teachers have also objected to the plans because of increased traffic.

Mr Furey said: "While the county council may believe they are making hard choices in difficult times, all they are doing is realising a small amount of money at the cost of long-term social, cultural and economic harm.

The council is expected to make a decision in March.

Rotary collection to send Shelterboxes to quake victims

ASHFORD'S Rotary Club members have moved quickly to help victims of the Haiti earthquake.

On Saturday a team of Rotarians collected in County Square to fund Shelterboxes for immediate dispatch to the disaster area.

Each Shelterbox contains a ten-person tent, items for warmth and protection, a basic tool kit, stove, utensils, water purification equipment and storage containers.

They also contain a children's pack with drawing books and crayons.

President Dr Stuart McRae said: "Once again we have been absolutely overwhelmed by the generosity of the people of Ashford.

"In just a few short hours we managed to raise enough for six Shelterboxes which will be shipped in the next few days along with the five already reserved this year by this club and the student members of the Interact Club at The Towers School."

One family who donated money told collectors their son would be



going to Haiti in the next few days as part of a relief team.

The contents of the Shelterboxes are adapted to each disaster and the Rotary Club keeps a range of equipment in stock.

The charity already has personnel on the ground in the Haiti capital Port-au-Prince and more than 1,000 Shelterboxes are already on their way, funded by Rotarians across the country.

To donate to the appeal visit can www.shelterbox.org or just google shelterbox.

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yourashford NEWS IN BRIEF

Find out more about sites on development shortlist

TWO exhibitions showing development plans in Willesborough, Kennington, Godinton Park, Warren and Singleton will take place this month.

The sites have been shortlisted for potential inclusion in the Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document (DPD).

One exhibition will be held at the Julie Rose Stadium from 5 to 8pm today. It will focus on sites in Willesborough and Kennington.

The other is at Godinton Village Hall on Wednesday, January 27, from 5.30pm to 8pm and will cover the areas of Godinton Park and Singleton.

Simon Cole, policy manager for Ashford council, said: "Questionnaires and information packs will be available as well as an opportunity to speak to council planners about the proposals."

Online campaign calls for ban on garden building

RESIDENTS in Kennington say they do not want the area to be blighted by housing developments in back gardens of homes.

They have set up an internet campaign group objecting to the building of 11 homes in the back garden of a detached home.

The Save Kennington Village website says: "A frightening number of gardens are being used for development and we mustn't let this happen in the historic part of Kennington."

Skillcrown Homes wants to replace a property at 80 Little Acre with three and four bedroom homes on the site.

For more details go to www.dbdnames.co.uk/savekenningtonvillage

Show won't go on after panto company closes

THEATRE fans in Stanhope were left disappointed this week when a pantomime had to be cancelled.

The production of Cinderella was to be staged by the Theatre Company Cre8tive at the Linden Grove Primary School, but the play had to be cancelled after the company was forced to cease trading.

More than 150 residents had been given tickets for the event by the housing association MOAT.

Restoration starts on neglected memorial

■ BY ED HILL

WORK has started on restoring one of Kennington's most recognisable landmarks.

The war memorial shelter and garden of remembrance on the corner of Ulley Road and Upper Vicarage Road was built to commemorate the people from the area who died during the Second World War.

The oak and wooden tiled structure was neglected until the Kennington Community Forum stepped in. Forum member Chris Morley began raising the funds last year.

He said: "We are delighted to see that work is about to begin."

The funds have been raised from many sources including the Kent County Council, English Heritage, local companies such as Premier Foods and Coty and donations from residents who have given sponsored tiles.

Mr Morley said: "This has been a real community effort."

The gardens, built in 1950, and commemorate 22 people who lost their lives – 17 servicemen and five civilians. It also has strong connections with the Queen Victoria Rifles, a London regiment based in Kennington at the time of the Dunkerque troop evacuation in 1940. The regiment's commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J A M Ellison-Macartney MC, was at the opening ceremony.



DELIGHTED: Members of Kennington Community Forum at the war memorial and remembrance gardens

English Heritage says the structure is a classic example of a lych gate oak-framed building.

The original memorial committee wanted to build something where people could sit and reflect on names carved on the nearby World War One memorial. However, their plans became more ambitious and the project grew into the shelter and remembrance gardens.

Local firms have been brought in to carry out the first phase of the work which includes repairing the wood tiles and removing graffiti.

This phase will cost £9,500.

Anthony Hicks, whose firm will be carrying out much of the work, said: "We are delighted to be involved; this is just the sort of work that we specialise in. We will renew the roof and replace the wooden balustrade. It should take us about three weeks."

The Kennington Forum would like to hear from anyone who has old photographs of the memorial. They can be contacted through Yourashford.



Record high for County Square

COUNTY Square has announced record levels of shoppers, despite the gloomy outlook for many retailers.

The end of the year total amounted to five million visitors – the highest number since the shopping centre opened.

Much of the increased footfall is due to the opening of the extension in March 2008 which brought well-known high street names to the centre of Ashford, including its first large department store, Debenhams.

The centre has also announced that Frances Burt, who has worked at the centre for many years as the commercial manager, has been pro-

moted to the role of centre manager. She has been involved in creating community links between County Square and local groups.

This has included the Creative Diploma pilot, which involves four schools taking part in fashion and film shows and concerts in the centre.

The centre also hosts the town's jazz festival and in September it staged its first ever fashion show, with children from Ashford dance schools.

Frances Burt said: "I am looking forward to a challenging year. I very much hope to grow on the success of last year and further develop the community relationships we have already forged."



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GOOD TURNOUT: The meeting about the proposed sludge plant went ahead, despite councillors failing to turn up

Council's 'snow show' at sludge plant meeting

COUNCILLORS who will decide whether a controversial sludge plant will be built in Sellindge failed to turn up to a meeting attended by residents.

Kent County Council said the snow was to blame for the planning committee members' no-show last Wednesday, as they would not be able to assess the full impact of the plans when visiting the site in person.

But the meeting went ahead as scheduled, with an estimated 180 people packing Sellindge Village Hall.

The anaerobic digestion plant on the old Otterpool Quarry site would take food and garden waste and break it down into a sludge-like liquid, for use as fertiliser.

Organiser Ronald Lello said of the proposals by developer Countrystyle: "It's insulting to planning officers, to members of the council and to us because this application is so inept."

He said the owners of the Airport Cafe opposite the site estimated they serve about 50,000 meals a year and had plans to turn their scrapyard into art and craft studios.

Mr Lello said: "A major waste treatment plant is going to wreck a business that has been worked at for 75 years."

■ BY JAMES ALEXANDRE

Local architect Bob Edden said the plans failed to adequately explain what the buildings would look like.

"What we have is an application which shows two entirely different and contradictory site access arrangements. There are only 12 drawings of the buildings, they can't make any of them match."

Heating engineer Les Barrett said the plans showed the company wanted to dig too far down into the groundwater, possibly poisoning the waterbeds which supply the area.

County councillor Susan Carey urged the audience to try to win over the committee members when they came to visit:

"From a planning officer point of view this one is finely balanced. Whichever way they go there will be sufficient grounds for refusal. The councillors will be able to say no if they want to and it will be defensible."

The plant has also been criticised by Protect Kent which also opposes KCC plans to build a lorry park to the west of the village.

Sean Fury from the group said: "We feel this would cause more harm than good."

An alternative date for the council inspection has been agreed for February 8.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Call to keep rail service

A MEETING of the council's Joint Transportation Board has demanded that the direct service to Brighton from Ashford be maintained.

Southern Trains wants to end the direct service so it can concentrate services in Hastings and Eastbourne.

The current journey to Brighton takes 1 hour 50 minutes.

The withdrawal of the service would mean passengers would have to change at Eastbourne, adding five extra stops and more than 20 minutes to the journey.

Members of the committee thought this might badly affect Ashford's status as a railway hub for high speed services and Eurostar in Kent.

They said the issue of overcrowding should be reviewed, but it could be solved by the company providing more carriages on the train.

Drugs cash confiscated

TWO convicted drugs dealers caught in Frittenden have been ordered to pay back £88,000 after an investigation by Kent Police.

Austin Deville and Alfred Brazil were found with several kilograms of cannabis in April 2008 and are now serving a four and a half year sentence.

Kent Police Serious Economic Crime unit has obtained a confiscation order under the Proceeds of Crime Act which allows the recovery of cash and assets obtained by criminal activity. Maidstone Crown Court last week ordered 35-year-old Deville to pay £31,475.77, and 40-year-old Brazil to pay back £57,379.77.

Sex shop costs 'too high'

THE council's licensing committee will be discussing its fees for obtaining a sex shop licence at a meeting on Wednesday.

At present it charges £2,670 for the fee and there is also an annual renewal fee. Because of a new European directive councils are not allowed to charge fees that may be seen as a deterrent to running a business.

According to the new law the council's fees are too high. It has been recommended that it lower its renewal fee from £1,920 to £500.

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Organisers set date for music festival

SELLINDGE Music Festival will be back this year with acts planned for three days in June.

There will be five music stages, a theatre and performing arts arena, interactive children's play area, live comedy, outdoor cinema, market-place, and European food court.

Sideways Recordings from Sandgate will host the chill-out area and the BBC Introducing stage will feature the best local bands.

Reduced early bird tickets will be available until the end of January. The event will be held at Gibbon's Brook on June 11, 12 and 13. For tickets visit www.sellindgemusicfestival.co.uk.

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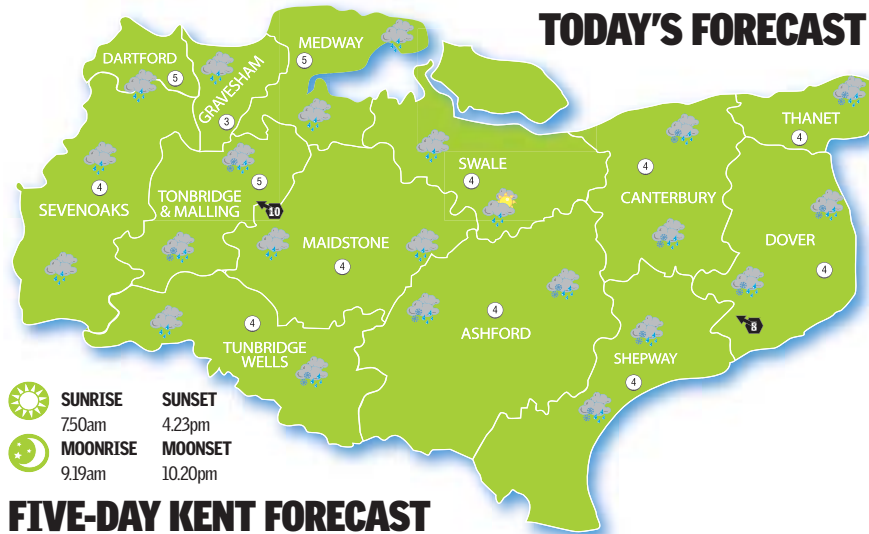
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WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	5:38pm	5.1m
	Sunday	6:35pm	4.9m
Dover	Saturday	3:42pm	5.6m
	Sunday	4:45pm	5.4m
Dungeness	Saturday	3:53pm	6.5m
	Sunday	4:58pm	6.2m
Ramsgate	Saturday	4:12pm	4.3m
	Sunday	5:15pm	4.1m
Sheerness	Saturday	5:27pm	5.0m
	Sunday	6:23pm	4.8m
Whitstable	Saturday	5:15pm	4.7m
	Sunday	6:12pm	4.5m



AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	3°C	Madrid	12°C
Athens	11°C	New York	3°C
Barcelona	11°C	Paris	4°C
Beijing	-1°C	Rome	9°C
Bombay	30°C	Sydney	24°C
Cape Town	24°C	Tenerife	28°C
Cardiff	9°C	Tokyo	7°C
Gibraltar	16°C	Vancouver	10°C
Hong Kong	20°C	Warsaw	-2°C
Las Palmas	23°C	Wellington	16°C

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon		Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	7°C	4°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Gravesend	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C
Canterbury	7°C	4°C	5°C	8°C	5°C	Maidstone	7°C	5°C	6°C	10°C	7°C
Chatham	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Ramsgate	7°C	4°C	5°C	8°C	5°C
Dartford	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Rochester	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C
Dover	6°C	4°C	5°C	8°C	5°C	Sevenoaks	6°C	3°C	4°C	8°C	5°C
Faversham	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Sittingbourne	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C
Folkestone	6°C	4°C	5°C	8°C	5°C	Tonbridge	7°C	3°C	6°C	9°C	6°C
Gillingham	7°C	5°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Tun Wells	7°C	3°C	6°C	9°C	6°C

Three milestones for classic steam railway

KENT and East Sussex Railway will celebrate three anniversaries this year.

Its small engine, Knowle, will be 130 years old. No 78 was one of 50 locos of its class produced for the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway by engineer William Stroudley.

Built in 1880, the 28-tonne engine served many railways in southern England.

It is estimated to have covered more than 1.4 million miles. It even had a spell as a static exhibit at a holiday camp in the 1960s.

She came to the K&ESR in 1940 when extra engines were needed for the war effort. She was also the last engine to pull a passenger service from Robertsbridge to Headcorn and ended her commercial life when the railway was closed by BR in 1963. She was restored by enthusiasts in 1999 to pull carriages on the historic railway.

Later this year the railway will be celebrating ten years since Bodiam station reopened and will also be marking the 21 years since the TV show Challenge Anneka came to the railway. The programme helped restore Northiam station and three miles of track.

Chicken sheds site visit

PLANNERS have delayed a decision on the future of former chicken sheds in Wye.

The buildings were erected in the 1950s at the old agricultural college.

Imperial College, which owns the Sidelands site, wants to turn them into commercial units, but villagers say local roads will not be able to cope with increased traffic and any new buildings could ruin views of the Wye crown on the North Downs.

Ashford council planning committee members decided on a site visit on February 3 and will discuss the application further at their next meeting.

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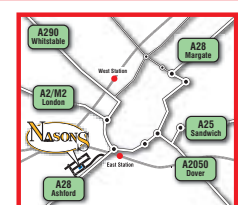


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yourlocalinterview

QUESTION & ANSWER

PAUL BARTLETT



Q How long have you had connections with Ashford?

A I have lived in the Ashford area since 1976, first in Merham and more recently in Sevington.

Q Why did you want to become a councillor?

A Many people find accessing public services a daunting experience. They can find the process intimidating and do not understand how to get the best out of what the council has to offer. In becoming a councillor I wanted to ensure that the public understand what the council can do for them and ensure that the council's services are fully accessible. It is important that the council acts fairly with its dealings with the public and I have always promoted ways in which this can be achieved.

Q What do you think are the major challenges that face the town at the moment?

A To ensure that the town takes full advantage of the new high speed train services from London. The new rail link will provide development opportunities for the town including new shopping, office and leisure developments, particularly along Elwick Road.

The council must ensure that these new developments are both sustainable and built to the very highest of standards. The green agenda must be put at the heart of these new buildings. The council has ambitious plans for

a new learning campus and Discovery Centre.

We want to improve the road transport infrastructure around junction 9 and 10 and build a new park-and-ride facility. We want to encourage a new and improved shopping offer in the town centre. We want to create new housing that people want to live in with good public services such as schools and hospitals which are of the very highest order.

The council has prided itself in setting one of the lowest council taxes in the South East and I very much want this to continue. We must ensure that we offer good value for money in everything we do, and that we only provide the services that people expect and want from their council.

Q Do you think that central Government could give local councils more powers to govern locally and perhaps set their own budgets? Is there too much interference?

A In short yes! Ashford council has a duty to govern Ashford in the best way possible for the benefit of the communities of Ashford. Localism should be at the heart of any government's agenda and it is important the council is given the freedom to manage its own affairs, for example in planning.

The council is committed to delivering the highest quality developments, and planning guidance from central government often limits what we can ask developers to build.

This is unfortunate as it can adversely affect the vision of what we want to see in Ashford.

In many cases we have seen decisions made locally overturned by the planning inspectorate, and this creates a disjointed vision of the town.

Q Do you think that people's cynicism towards national politicians affects your role as well?

A Yes, there is a general cynicism and weariness of all politicians and this is a great shame as most politicians are not in it for what they can get out of it, but genuinely want to make a contribution which will improve the quality of life. However it is only by getting things done efficiently and quickly and by solving people's problems that this cynicism will disappear.

Q What would you say to persuade someone to move to Ashford?

A It is a great place to live and work, has great transport links, access to great countryside, some of the best schools in the county, great opportunities to develop new businesses and excellent leisure opportunities.

Q How do you spend your spare time?

A I have a great interest in racing and showing greyhounds. A greyhound I have a part share in won the 2008 St Leger at Wimbledon and another was best of breed at Crufts in 2009. It's a great hobby where you meet lots of interesting people.


Q&A


The deputy leader of Ashford Borough Council spoke to **Ed Hill** about the immediate challenges facing the council, the benefits of localisation of government, and his passion for showing and racing greyhounds

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we did

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To report fly-tipping where you live, take note of vehicle details and contact Ashford Borough Council on **01233 331111** or visit **www.cleankent.com**



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A hole load of expensive trouble for KCC after heavy snow

COUNTY Hall is bracing itself for a torrent of compensation claims linked to the hundreds of potholes forming on Kent's roads.

Motorists forced to pay out for puncture and suspension damage repairs are expected to flood the council's mailbags with demands that the authority should foot the bill, at a potential cost to the taxpayer of tens of thousands of pounds.

The lengthy cold snap has left many of the county's major routes in a state of disrepair, with the potholes creating yet

another hazard for road-users already long fed up with the earlier snow and ice.

Last week KCC was forced to pay out £6,250 to Welling resident Kenneth Atkinson, who suffered a badly-dislocated shoulder after falling from his bicycle in May 2007.

The 76-year-old has since been forced to give up his hobby following the pothole encounter, for which the council initially denied liability.

Mr Atkinson's lawyer Paul Kitson, partner at Russell Jones

and Walker, said: "This case illustrates the difficulties in obtaining compensation from highway authorities.

"They rarely admit liability for accidents involving road defects and it is usually necessary to issue court proceedings.

"The claim was delayed due to arguments between KCC and its third-party contractors [Scotia Gas Networks]. "The pothole in question had been repaired previously, but at the time of Mr Atkinson's accident it was five feet long and four inches deep."

The severity of the pothole problem became clear on Tuesday when at least eight drivers had to pull over on the M20 after suffering punctures to their tyres as a result of a particularly deep one.

To make a claim, visit the roads and transport section of www.kent.gov.uk and click on 'fault reporting' followed by 'claims for damage'.

• **Would we all be better off driving 4x4s in the county? See this week's Yourblogger on page 14.**



JOB INTERVIEW: Mike Fuller was questioned by MPs

Fuller puts himself forward as head of Prosecution Service

KENT'S Chief Constable Michael Fuller has told MPs why he believes he should be appointed the next head of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr Fuller – who is Britain's first black police chief – has been selected by Attorney General Baroness Scotland as the preferred candidate to replace current Chief Inspector Stephen Wooler, whose contract at the CPS expires at the end of March.

An announcement regarding Mr Fuller's future is due to be made tomorrow (Thursday).

Last week he told members of the House of Commons justice committee why he thought he was a more suitable choice for the role than a former judge or lawyer.

Experience

He said: "While I don't have knowledge of the day-to-day work of a crown prosecutor, I still bring a lot of knowledge of the system and experience of being a stockholder of the CPS.

"I have experience of running organisations and police departments successfully."

Mr Fuller told the committee that adjusting to policy changes and providing value for money represented two of the biggest challenges for the Chief Inspector of the CPS but that he was fully prepared to cope with both.

He also refuted a suggestion by Sleaford and North Hykeham MP Douglas Hogg that the police and CPS had an "incestuous" relationship and were too closely linked for one to be scrutinised by the other.

Mr Fuller said: "Decision-making has always been independent and I think the public would see me as someone who would bring objectivity and scrutiny where it's needed.

"You need a certain degree of knowledge of the CPS and how it works, and more importantly of the rubbing points. I've seen them first-hand and can therefore make recommendations that are credible."

Mr Fuller joined Kent Police as Chief Constable in January 2004, having previously been with the Met since starting as a cadet in 1975.

Police admit illegal stop and searching

■ BY STEVE KNIGHT

KENT Police have admitted using stop-and-search powers illegally in what could prove a landmark case for Kingsnorth Climate Camp protestors.

Lawyers representing Chief Constable Mike Fuller told the High Court the force accepted that its officers wrongfully searched at least three demonstrators – including 11-year-old twins – who attended the summer 2008 rally.

They also admitted that an unspecified number of other protestors could have been unlawfully stopped, potentially opening the door for further legal action to be brought against the police.

Hundreds of similar cases are already going through the system, with one lawyer describing the cost to the taxpayer as potentially "staggering".

However, Mr Fuller's representative Richard Perks told the two High Court judges it was not accepted that the police had secretly applied a blanket unlawful stop-and-search policy at the camp.

He said there had been a "clear and lawful" policy and that the huge majority of those stopped had not been done so illegally but accepted there had been "a misapplication of a clear policy by officers on the ground".



Picture: KNP

POLICE UNDER FIRE: Demonstrators at Kingsnorth have always claimed the police response to the protest was disproportionate to the threat posed by activists

Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 states that officers must have "reasonable suspicion" that an individual is carrying prohibited weapons or articles that could be used for criminal damage before they are stopped and searched.

Mr Perks added that while guidance given to individual officers was correct and accurate, "on occasions it was misapplied in practice".

The announcement came just hours after the European Court of Human Rights ruled it illegal for police to use terror laws to stop and search people without grounds for suspicion.

Home Secretary Alan Johnson said he was disappointed with the decision and would

appeal against it.

The environmental rally at Kingsnorth in summer 2008 was over E.ON's plans to build a new coal-fired power station, which the company put on hold for up to three years last October.

Politicians, protestors and academics involved in the demonstration have always claimed the police response was disproportionate to the threat posed by the activists.

Officers were also accused of being heavy-handed with the campaigners, seizing hundreds of personal items including soap and board games.

They also took a clown's wig, crayons and highlighter pens belonging to the twin children involved in last week's High Court hearing.

The judges heard how one of the youngsters – who cannot be named for legal reasons – was left "crying and shaking" after a female officer said he had to be searched.

He feared he would "go to prison" because he had stickers in his bag which other people had had confiscated.

Long-standing environmental campaigner David Morris, from north London, was also at the court and said he was forcibly searched against his will.

All three are seeking judicial review into police powers and potential damages.

The case has been adjourned while further evidence is considered before a settlement is reached or a full court hearing called for.

Kent Police declined to comment.



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Commuters face further fare rise

Government policy stings rail travellers

COMMUTERS across Kent are facing higher travel charges following a Government review of transport policy.

And train passengers parking in many of the station car parks will now also find they have to fork out more money on parking costs.

The changes – which came into effect last week – form part of the Department for Transport's new policy which involves reducing the subsidies it pays into the industry.

As a result, commuter fares for Southeastern's unregulated off-peak tickets have increased by 7.3 per cent, and others by 2.8 per cent.

Fares from outside the Travelcard area, including the London Underground, have seen a 1.6 per cent increase.

Subsidy

Some ticket prices, however, have stayed the same.

A spokesman for Southeastern said: "Government says the budget for running the cost of the railways should not be paid by subsidies through the taxpayer.

"The Government has stated that it should be put back on those who use the service – it will not subsidise the cost of the railways like in Europe.

"What Government is doing is reducing the subsidies it pays to us, but to compensate it is allowing us to increase the ticket prices."

Charles Horton, managing director at Southeastern, added: "The majority of our passengers are commuters who travel into London on a daily basis.

"Most of these are season-ticket-holders and any changes to their fares are regulated by the Department for Transport.

"The Government's stated policy is to reduce the subsidy paid to the transport industry and for passengers to pay more towards the cost of using rail services."

BY MARIJKE COX

But Tunde Olatunji, South East spokesman for Passenger Focus, an independent rail consumer watchdog, believes commuters will place the blame with Southeastern rather than with the Government.

He said: "Southeastern may use the lack of Government subsidies as its defence, but for the passenger it is Southeastern they pay the money to and therefore the company people will hold responsible for the changes.

"This all comes down to value for money. If costs are increasing, the passengers will want to see the service improving."

Car-parking costs have also gone up at the majority of station car parks in Kent, but Southeastern defended this by saying it was the first change the company had made in 18 months.

"In terms of car-parking, the majority of station car-park prices have gone up by differing amounts," a spokesman said.

"This has been done to help cover running costs.

"This hasn't changed in 18 months, so we are simply bringing this in line with what has to be paid to Network Rail and money for the upkeep of the car parks."

Mr Olatunji said that although car-parking was a business and people had to pay to park, the level of service should be kept up.

"Passengers have to pay parking costs, otherwise there would be too much pressure on the car parks," he said.

"The issue is about how much Southeastern charges in relation to the level of service offered.

"There was a case at Hollingbourne station where a car was stolen but when the police checked the CCTV there was no tape in there.

"If people are paying money to park, then the service should be sufficient."

For more information about Southeastern trains and ticket prices, you can go to www.southeasternrailway.co.uk.

Heavy cost of modern funerals

FUNERALS can be big affairs, and they are getting larger all the time.

As people get heavier, the dearly departed are causing problems in death, say undertakers.

John Weir runs several undertakers' offices in Kent and is also the UK spokesman for the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors.

He said that although the complications caused by oversize bodies was not widespread yet, it was getting worse as we ate more in life.

His company has invested in a powerful electric hoist to move bodies around and lower them into larger-than-life coffins, and he said many hospital mortuaries had done the same.

The complications continue when it comes to the funeral itself.

Cranes have been known to lift coffins into double-sized graves before the congregation arrives to avoid any embarrassing scenes.

Some councils are charging by the foot for their graves – so the bigger the body and coffin, the more the plot costs.

Mr Weir said: "Crematoria don't usually do that – it's one just one flat charge."

But he said Vinters Park in Maidstone had recently introduced a larger cremator which was 41 inches wide as opposed to the more usual 28 inches wide just to cope with an increase in larger coffins.

He said there was a knock-on effect for the taxpayer as local authorities had to pay for the new cremators. Plus, with larger graves, cemeteries ran out of valuable space quicker, forcing some authorities to reuse old plots.

Coffin-maker Julian Atkinson said his products were now larger by two inches in length and width.

"We used to do one a month that was oversized, now it is two or three a week," he said.



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REGULATED FARES FROM JANUARY 2010

STATION	2009		JANUARY 2010			
	Return	Monthly	Annual	Return	Monthly	Annual
Orpington	£9.80	£139	£1,448	£9.80	£139	£1,448
Tonbridge	£22.90	£288	£3,000	£23.30	£292.60	£3,048
Hastings	£46.30	£368.60	£3,840	£47.10	£368.60	£3,840
Ashford Int	£40.60	£362.90	£3,780	£41.30	£368.60	£3,840
Ashford Int	£48.70	£435.50	£4,536	£49.50	£442.40	£4,608
High Speed						
Ramsgate	£47.00	£366.70	£3,820	£47.80	£372.50	£3,880
Ramsgate	£55.10	£439.30	£4,576	£56.00	£446.20	£4,648
High Speed						
Faversham	£35.90	£345.60	£3,600	£36.50	£351	£3,656
Faversham	£41.30	£415.90	£4,332	£41.90	£422	£4,396
High Speed						

OFF-PEAK (UNREGULATED) DAY RETURN FROM JAN 2010

STATION	OFF-PEAK RETURN		SUPER OFF-PEAK RTN	
	2009	Jan 2010	2009	Jan 2010
Sevenoaks	£8.80	£9.40	n/a	n/a
Margate (not HS)	£25.30	£27.10	£18.10	£18.60
Hastings	£24.20	£26.00	£18.10	£18.60
Sittingbourne	£16.00	£17.20	£14.10	£14.50
Sittingbourne	£18.70	£20.10	n/a	n/a
High Speed				
Folkestone Central	£24.60	£26.40	£18.10	£18.60
Folkestone Central	£28.70	£30.80	n/a	n/a
High Speed				



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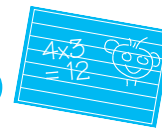


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Pupils convince businessmen to build play area

CHILDREN at Ashford Oaks will soon get the chance to play in a new adventure playground after students convinced a local construction company that they deserved to have it built.

The school was formed by the merger of Ashford South and Oak Tree primary schools in 2008. Although that provided it with modern facilities, one thing missing was a creative play area.

Derek Gilbert, company director of GSE Group, said: "The school approached us to see if we could help them solve that and it quickly became clear that its needs and profile aligned very well with our position as a major local employer.

Buddies

"We wanted to encourage pupils to participate at all stages of the project so we challenged the School Council to state a case for us to build the play area for them without telling them that we had already agreed to do the work."

The School Council, made up of a cross section of pupils of varying ages, and Playground Buddies gave a short presentation to three company directors on why their

■ BY ED HILL

school deserved to have the work carried out and the sort of equipment they would like to see included.

Mr Gilbert said: "They needed no guidance from the staff in setting out their position and provided some fascinating points of view. Their ability to communicate effectively with three middle-aged businessmen was commendable and they gave a very convincing presentation."

The playground will be made of a series of giant tyres to tests the children's agility and balance.

Jane Marshall, from the school, said a key element of the process was that pupils would be involved throughout project.

She said: "The children will be involved right from the outset. They will be meeting with the architects and will be able to have their say on the design and, quite importantly, will be told about the costs involved so that they learn the value of what is being built for them.

"The children will also visit GSE Plant and learn about the machinery they use. It's a wonderful project and we're very grateful to the GSE Group for making it happen."

school was open to those students who faced exams, although children whose parents worked for essential services or who could not arrange childcare also attended.

Homewood School in Tenterden has been forced to change the date of a Year-8 open evening for students to Thursday, January 21.

New headteacher for Knatchbull

THE new headteacher at Norton Knatchbull Grammar School has been announced.

Susanne Staab, who is currently deputy head at Folkestone Grammar, will be taking over from John Speller who was appointed headmaster in 1997. Mr Speller will be leaving at the end of the summer term.

BREAK TIME

Exams go ahead despite snowfall

ASHFORD secondary schools had to ensure students could still take exams despite the chaos caused by snow at the beginning of term.

The Towers School managed to hold exams for pupils in the afternoon after it opened to staff at 10.30am.

The North School had to cancel two staff development days to make up for the lost school time at the beginning of term.

The Norton Knatchbull School was fully open on the Monday that exams began.

Highworth Grammar School was able to tell its students it would be open as normal through its new Twitter feed.

Christ Church School was affected more seriously by the bad weather. The



FUN AND GAMES: Ashford Oaks school playground will soon have a new adventure area thanks to the pupils' ideas

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Gary Wright urges all motorists to report potholes, and to claim for any resulting damage to their vehicles



Why weren't our roads ready for the inevitable big freeze?

IF EVER there was an argument for driving a huge 4x4, then Kent's roads provide it.

The appalling state of maintenance in this county is highlighted every winter, after freezing conditions cause huge cracks to open up.

Potholes cost drivers a heap of cash, wrecking tyres, alloy wheels and suspension. Tyre dealers doubtless rub their hands with glee, but for the rest of us it's an annual nuisance.

We should not put up with it. But if we have to, then it's time to consider a 4x4 instead of the stylish, economical motors that our green cheeks would have us all drive.

Report every pothole you see to 08458 247 800. That way the council has to do something and it has been informed.

We all know you can claim for the damage to your car, provided – as the council's website makes clear – you can prove “clear evidence that Kent County Council (KCC) has been

negligent in its role as highway authority”.

Well I suggest KCC is always negligent through lack of proper care and preparation.

The council has promised it will blitz our roads and carry out repairs ... in March.

That is just not good enough. It means six weeks or so of swerving around the canyons that have opened up in our streets. Surely KCC should address the problem right now?

Freezing weather is no surprise. The fact that our poorly-maintained roads crack up at the first sign of frost is no surprise. So KCC should be prepared, and if it isn't, that's negligent.

I watched KCC leader Paul Carter squirm as Meridian TV interviewed him about the pothole problem. Asked about compensation for wrecked wheels and tyres, he mumbled something about 'looking after public money', suggesting not every wrecked car would be paid for out of the public purse.

Shame they weren't so careful with our cash when £50 million was handed over to doomed Icelandic banks really.

The council's annual budget for potholes is £3 million, apparently, and a spokesman said:

“Kent Highway Services had already set aside an extra £576,000 to take account of an expected increased workload due to bad weather – and the additional £1 million comes on top of this.”

It is not enough.

Then Cllr Carter dressed it up by making it look as though it was supporting local business by inviting them to help with the repairs.

He said: “We are keen to use small and medium-sized engineering companies from across Kent. They will be encouraged to bid for tenders to repair our roads as part of our Backing Kent Business campaign. We hope this will provide a welcome boost for local business.”

Hmm, I'm not so sure other small businesses running cars and vans will feel quite so supported after shelling out for vehicle repairs.

If your car has been damaged visit www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport and go to 'fault reporting'. Happy motoring.

GET IN TOUCH...

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EMAIL: Letters, comments, views (along with your name) to: yourashford@kosmedia.co.uk



TEXT: **ASH** then your message to: 81800 (please remember to include your name)

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If there is a story in your area you think we should be covering contact the editor, **Gareth Arnold**, on 01303 817025 or email him on the details above. If you want to be the next Ashford blogger then all you have to do is submit an article to us (of around 550 words) and email it to the editor. And don't forget, for all the latest news and video from your town log-on to www.yourashford.co.uk.

Write to The Editor, YourAshford, KoS Media, Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR.

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Churchill
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Bromley

WIN tickets to hit musical Dreamboats and Petticoats now!

DUE to its phenomenal West End success, Dreamboats and Petticoats, the smash hit musical inspired by the million-plus selling albums, is to extend its UK tour.

The dazzling success of the first two albums in the Dreamboats and Petticoats series sent the message loud and clear. With over two millions copies sold and several weeks in the compilation charts, the Great British public were saying that they didn't just want to listen to pure nostalgia: they'd love to see it as well.

Thus Dreamboats was born as a musical, opening at The Churchill Theatre in Bromley in February 2009 to rave critical reviews and widespread audience acclaim. Over a million people have since been enchanted by an evening of pure hedonistic affection for a more innocent era, when love was young and so was rock 'n' roll.

Having recently sold out on its return there in November 2009, the show will begin its extended run with a two week visit, from Tuesday, January 19 2010 and continue on a 17 week national tour.

Yourlocal has 10 pairs of tickets up for grabs to see this great show.

To enter, answer the question below

and send your entry on a postcard along with your email address (if applicable), name, address, and daytime telephone number to Rochester Castle Sunday Competition, KOS Media, Apple Barn, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR. The closing date is January 25, 2009.

Question: Where is the Churchill Theatre?

Book tickets for the show running from 19-30 Jan, from Churchill Theatre, Bromley. Phone: 08448 717 620 (booking fee applies) or at www.ambassador tickets.com/bromley.

No purchase necessary. For our full Terms and Conditions please visit www.kentnews.co.uk, or for a posted copy of the T&Cs call 01303 817073. If you do not wish to receive any literature please write 'no literature on your entry'.



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TALK TIME

DAVID ROBERT

The Bike it officer for Ashford and Canterbury on pedalling his way around our schools



How did you get the job?

I have been a really keen cyclist since I was at school. I used bikes to get to university and work and I take part in a lot of local events. I have also cycled a stage of the Tour de France. I am also an ex-teacher and careers advisor so I have always been involved in education. I was also the only one out of six candidates who cycled to the interview, which I think may have helped.

What is your role?

Bike it is a project run by the Sustrans sustainable transport charity. There are about 56 officers around the country. I am the only one in Kent. My role gets some funding from Kent Highway Services as well as other sources.

Our job is to encourage young people to make the school journey by bicycle. That is not an option for everyone, so there is a wider message just to encourage young people to cycle more whenever they can, such as at the weekends or holidays.

I help schools to draw up their school travel plan. I also arrange for bike storage on the site, where we can and we work with the school community to come up with events that will encourage the children to cycle.

Each school I work with has a bike crew of children and staff who plan and organise events.

Sustrans is also involved in developing cycle routes?

Yes, that is our biggest project. We run and maintain the National Cycle Network. As part of that I do the Links to School programme. If a school does not have good cycle links, I work on creating a link with an existing cycle route. That happened at East Stour Primary School.

YOUR LETTERS



We had all been told not to travel

While I agree that the train service in the south east is overpriced and rather inefficient, I think it's a bit much that commuters are blaming Southeastern Trains for their experience during the bad weather.

Weather warnings are on the news for a reason... you know the things I'm talking about, "only travel if it's absolutely necessary", "widespread transport disruption" and so on and so forth.

I find it hard to believe these can have been missed, so I don't really understand the gentleman's indignant tone when he finds his train is trapped by the snow.

Martin Dryden, Ashford

No sympathy for adding to danger

It is not often I find myself writing in defence of train operators, but really, what did Mr Rosser expect when he got on the train that morning? A quick and easy

journey there and back regardless of conditions?

The white stuff falling from the sky and the myriad warnings on the news should have been some indication this would not be the case.

I do sympathise – one hour is enough to spend on one of Southeastern's trains quite frankly, let alone 12 – but it's important to understand that some situations are unavoidable, and are not really anyone's fault.



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Not only can you use email and letters to respond to our stories, don't forget you can comment via our website too.

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On www.yourashford.co.uk you can access, for free, the full newspaper in our highly-acclaimed e-editions.

I worked from home for two days during the worst of the snow as I had no wish to either spend the night in my car or at worst, add to the problems faced by the already over-stretched emergency services.

Many of those who "battled into work" will have been causing more harm than good quite frankly, as is clear from the number of crashes over the period of bad weather.

Ron Green, Ashford

A bad example to our school children

Like many parents I was again left incensed by the ease with which schools simply close when there's snow... but it seems Ofsted (that bastion of ensuring standards) may be to blame.

Unfortunately we live in an age when teachers – who get loads more holiday than anyone else in the working world – believe that a little bad weather means they should have the day off school.

Without wishing to go on about this too much, surely if you take a job – any job – you agree with your employer to turn up on time and do the work you are paid for.

Whether you are a teacher, shopworker or office worker you have a responsibility to your employer. Live too far away from your workplace? That's your choice, think about it before you take the job on. If it's going to snow, then if you live too far away, you should make arrangements to stay nearby or of course, take it as a holiday.

But, with teachers setting the appalling example to our children, we now have a culture in Britain where snow means take

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a day off. Fortunately, police officers, doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers seem to be better able to get into work than most. And while you hear people say "I can't get to work" you never seem to hear "I can't get home". This is Britain not Siberia.

So, back to teachers who finished their two-week Christmas break just in time for their annual fistful of snow days. Why, you ask, do so many schools close?

Well it seems Ofsted may really be to blame. Attendance is one of the standards by which school performance is judged. If the school opens on a snowy day and children stay at home, the school will be penalised. However, if it closes because of snow, Ofsted marks it with 100 per cent attendance.

Name supplied, by email

Thanks for all your healthy support

Meningitis UK would like to thank everyone who has supported us throughout 2009 – the charity's 10th anniversary year.

Despite great advances with vaccines for Meningitis C, Hib and pneumococcal meningitis, there is still no vaccine for Meningitis B – the most common form of the dis-

ease in the UK. Six families a week lose a loved-one to the brain bug.

Our Search 4 a Vaccine Campaign aims to raise £7million to fund lifesaving research into eradicating Meningitis B, which can kill in under four hours.

If any of your readers would like a symptoms information pack, or to support our Search 4 a Vaccine Campaign, please call Meningitis UK on 0117 373 7373 or visit www.meningitisUK.org

Steve Dayman,
Chief Executive of Meningitis UK

Recycle for research to help beat cancer

Many of you may know how mobile phone recycling schemes can help raise money for charity. But they may not know that you don't have to stop there. You can also recycle old Sat Navs, MP3 players, digital cameras, laptops and even printer and toner cartridges.

We at World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) have launched a new scheme urging people to send these items for recycling to help raise valuable funds for our work.

WCRF will receive £3.50 for every phone and £1 for every recyclable ink cartridge. We also receive dona-

tions for old MP3 players, Sat-Navs, digital cameras and laptops.

The scheme is easy and free to take part in. We can provide free-post recycling envelopes and labels.

To find out more about the scheme email recycling@wcrf.org or call 020 7343 4205.

Teresa Nightingale
World Cancer Research Fund

Bank charges review is simply unfair

I was bitterly disappointed with the Office of Fair Trading's decision to drop its investigation into the fairness of bank overdraft charges.

Millions of bank customers were hoping to be reimbursed for excessive charges imposed by the banks. In many cases these charges amounted to thousands of pounds.

I am however, pleased that the Liberal Democrats will continue the fight for fair bank charges in Parliament and push for a change in the law if necessary so high street banks cannot keep ripping off their customers.

Having come so close to overhauling an unfair system that penalises vulnerable groups of people, the campaign cannot and will not stop.

Andy Stamp, by email

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Funnier than a broken record

Comedy legends are sketching out their success

PAPPY'S

Thursday, February 4
Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury



LOCAL heroes return to Canterbury next month to attempt a world record with their lightning wit.

Pappy's are an award-winning comedy trio who have taken the circuit by storm with their ridiculous humour and silly characters. Now they have set their sights on a place in the record books by performing 200 sketches in an hour.

The trio have just had a fantastic year in which they enjoyed a sell-out run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and earned five-star reviews for their uplifting show. Previously they had

recorded their own shows for Channel 4 and Radio 4, appeared on BBC3's Comedy Shuffle and ITV2's Comedy Cuts and received a number of award nominations. In 2008 they won the Chortle Best Sketch Act Award and the plaudits keep coming for their imaginative work.

Pappy's Fun Club started out as four students – Matthew Crosby from Bromley, Tom Parry, Ben Clark and Brendan Dodds – who performed comedy to entertain their friends; the three of them had met at the University of Kent.

Before long they had been nominated for the IfComedy Best Show Award at Edinburgh, a prestigious accolade that got their comedy careers off to a flying start.

The team like to gig on the stand-

up club circuit and in that environment bringing down the 'fourth wall' erected by many sketch troupes has been invaluable.

The performers address the audience directly and like to react to anything that might be happening in the room during sketches.

Their success on the circuit and at Edinburgh resulted in TV interest, including a 22-minute Comedy Lab for Channel 4. Pappy's had the chance to work with Ash Atalla, producer of The Office, and relished the chance to translate their stage material to the screen.

They went on to perform around the world and draw high praise from critics, though Dodds left the group at the end of last year and the remaining trio decided to continue under the name Pappy's.

You can see them attempt to break a world record when the show, which is suitable for over-14s, starts at 7.45pm. Tickets cost £12 or £10 for Encore! Gulbenkian members. To book, phone 01227 769075 or visit www.gulbenkiantheatre.co.uk.



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COMEDY CLUB

Friday, January 22
Ashford International Hotel



GET your laughing gear around the latest tempting morsels at the Comedy Club.

This month there are three top specimens on the menu, all waiting to satisfy your appetite for big belly laughs. Comedian, actor and writer Barry Castagnola acts as MC for the evening, showing why he is an in-demand compere who has performed all over the world.

Dougie Dunlop opens the evening, creating jokes from very ordinary situations. He started out at The Stand in his hometown of Edinburgh and went on to make his fringe festival debut with The Midnight Show. Since then, his career has gone from strength to strength.

Headline act Tony Gerrard is the only professional comedian in a wheelchair. His Jewish roots, contempo-



rary material and fantastic delivery have kept him at the top of his game and earned him fans all over the country.

The show, which is suitable for over-18s, starts at 9pm.

Tickets cost £20 or £18 for members including a two-course meal, or £14 for the comedy only.

To book call 01233 219988 or visit the website at www.hahaheehee.co.uk.

MAVERICK LIVE

Monday, January 25
Breeze Bar, Maidstone



INTERNATIONAL music stars grace the stage in a double headline show for Maverick Live next week.

Talented and creative, Kimmie Rhodes is a cult figure in the music business during her long career. For more than 25 years, the Texas songbird has been writing and performing beautiful music that has made her a mainstay of the Austin music scene.

Her talent as a songwriter has been noticed by big stars and her songs have been covered by the likes of Waylon Jennings, Wynonna, Willie Nelson, Trisha Yearwood, Amy Grant, Mark Knopfler and Emmylou Harris.

Also appearing is Holly Williams (pictured), granddaughter of music icon, Hank Williams and his son Hank Williams Jr.

She avoided following in her musical family's footsteps for several years and when she did finally pick up a guitar, she opted for a more introspective approach to songwriting rather than the country sound so associated with the Williams.

The concert starts at 7.45pm and tickets cost £15 in advance or £18 on the door. To book call 01622 744481.



NEW SEASON

Various dates
Sinden Theatre, Tenterden



FROM magic to music, there is something for everyone at the Sinden Theatre this season.

Whether you want to kick up your heels to Irish folk music, groove with the Rat Pack (pictured) or hear about the career of a sports legend, the Tenterden theatre has a fantastic programme of shows lined up.

The new season opens with the return of the ELO Experience, the acclaimed tribute to one of the UK's most popular groups.

In March, Gerald Dickens steps into the

world of his famous great, great-grandfather Charles, to bring a host of much-loved characters to life.

Humour and music are on offer when Irish folk stars, The Fureys and Davy Arthur, return for an evening of great entertainment. Enjoy a complete change of tone when The Rat Pack brings the spirit of Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis and Dean Martin to the stage in May.

With cricket commentary legend Henry Blofeld and star magician Paul Daniels also in the line-up, there is much to enjoy at the Sinden Theatre this year. Find out more by visiting www.sindentheatre.biz or calling the box office on 01580 763826.

ASHFORD LEISURE

Here's a Scandal that just won't go away

AFTER a 12-year absence, Scandal is back to rock the local music circuit.

The four-piece band will keep some of its set from the 90s, which featured hits by Nirvana and Pearl Jam, along with original material. Find out more at www.scandal.moonfruit.com.

Scandal are at the George Hotel in High Street, Ashford, on Saturday. For details call the pub on 01233 625512.

Sound and light make for Supersonic show

WITH their spectacular light show and lively performances, SuperSonic is a vibrant functions band.

They specialise in tracks from the 90s and 2000s. Check them out at www.supersonicfunctionband.com.

SuperSonic are at The Star in East Hill, Ashford on Saturday. For details of the venue call 01233 620391 or visit www.starashford.co.uk.

Eat to the funky beat at pizza restaurant

GROOVE to some of the UK's finest funk musicians at Pizza Express in Maidstone on Saturday.

Hosted by Real vocalist Louise Pollock and Jamiroquai's Derrick McKenzie, Funk Affair! also features special guests.

The show starts at 8pm and tickets cost £15. To book or for more information visit the website at www.pizzaexpresslive.co.uk.

Remember golden age of rock at pub gig

THE best of rock and blues from a golden era can be heard live in Ashford.

For an evening of great songs from the late 60s and early 70s, see the Blackdog Band at The Star in East Hill at 9pm on Friday. Formerly the Bar Stewards, they play songs by the likes of Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones and many more. Find out more online at www.theblackdogband.com.

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ASHFORD SHOPPING

**Thanet film Ruby Blue
is out on DVD now**

AWARD-WINNING Kent film, Ruby Blue, will be available to buy on DVD from February 1.

Filmed locally by Thanet-based company, Medb Films, the movie starred Bob Hoskins and won numerous accolades, such as Best Film at the London Independent Film Festival and the Grand Jury Best Film Award at the Washington DC Independent Film Festival.

The DVD can be pre-ordered at www.amazon.co.uk.

**Hairy Bikers are riding
into Bluewater today**

FANS of the Hairy Bikers will want to make tracks to Bluewater next week when the TV stars pay a visit.

Si King and Dave Myers will be appearing at Waterstone's at 5pm today, to sign copies of their new cookery book. Mums Know Best: the Hairy Bikers' Family Cookbook accompanies their new TV series, in which they look at the culinary gems passed down through generations.

The book is priced at £20. For more information call 01322 624831.

**Give your tastebuds a
tasty Italian treat**

ENJOY a taste of Italy on a budget with Carluccio's bargain Menu Della Casa.

The authentic Italian cafes in Canterbury, Tunbridge Wells and Bluewater are inviting diners to try a two-course meal for just £8.50. Using finest quality ingredients from Italy, the menu offers starters and main courses. The price also includes your choice of exclusively blended and roasted Napoli or Milano coffee. The offer runs until the end of February. For more information visit www.carluccios.com.

**Become a Down Under
beauty at Debenhams**

DISCOVER the Australian beauty range Natio for less with a new offer available at Debenhams.

The products are stocked at the Chatham and Gravesend stores, giving Kent customers the chance to sample this big hit from Down Under. Until January 31, shoppers can enjoy a £5-off offer on all foundations.

See the on-counter offers at Debenhams in Chatham and Gravesend for more information.

**Get yourself fit and
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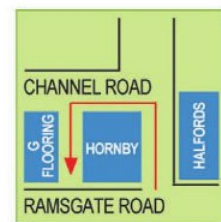
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Mergers and acquisitions:

ISSUES FOR BUYERS

BUYING a business involves many risks. If a buyer is not careful, he may end up paying more than just the agreed purchase price. However, with careful planning and proper advice, these risks can be reduced.

The most important factor is to know what you are buying. This may seem an obvious point, but if you are buying shares in a company, you are buying all assets and liabilities of that company, whether known or unknown, actual or contingent.

Due diligence is vital, therefore. This will involve scrutinising the target's financial and tax records, cash-flows and budgets, business and employment contracts, properties and other assets.

The price will probably be agreed with the seller before due diligence takes place, but a buyer must not be afraid to renegotiate if due diligence throws up issues or liabilities which were not expected.

The price payable for the business can be structured in many ways. It is rare nowadays for a buyer and seller to agree a fixed price, all of which is payable on the date of the acquisition. The price can be payable in instalments and occasionally the value of the instalments are calculated by reference to the profits or turnover of the business during the intervening period (known as an earn-out). It is also quite common for the price to be adjusted by reference to accounts of the business which are prepared as at the date of the acquisition, so the buyer is paying for the assets and liabilities on the balance sheet at that date.

If the target business is a company, the buyer may choose to buy the shares or the assets from the company. Buying shares is generally more risky for a buyer. It means buying the company 'lock, stock and barrel' and inheriting any skeletons in the company's cupboard. It is actu-

ally a much simpler structure and likely to be favoured by sellers. Buying assets may be more tax-efficient for the buyer and it allows the buyer to cherry-pick the specific assets it wants, but it will involve the complexities of transferring individual assets and having to renew or assign contracts with customers and suppliers.

The principle method for a buyer to protect itself against unknown liabilities post-acquisition is to obtain warranties from the seller.

Warranties are statements of fact relating to the business which are relied on by the buyer as being true. If a warranty subsequently turns out to be untrue, the buyer will be able to claim damages for breach of warranty. The warranties often take up a significant proportion of the purchase contract and a lot of time is often spent negotiating their terms and application.

Compensation

The warranties serve two purposes: Firstly, they force the seller to disclose any information it knows about a warranty which is untrue, so the buyer has a full picture of what it is buying. Secondly, the warranties serve as a price adjustment mechanism by enabling the buyer to claim compensation for damages, losses or liabilities arising from a warranty being untrue, effectively reducing the price of the business.

Employees are often key to a business, but sometimes a buyer will not want or need all of the seller's employees. However, a buyer will inherit responsibility for all of the seller's employees, so careful consideration is necessary before any redundancy decisions are made, either by the buyer or the seller.

The acquisition of a business should be a stepping stone for greater success and profits for a buyer. Buyers must ensure that the terms of the acquisition fully protect them against it being an expensive mistake.



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DONE DEAL: Make sure you are aware of the risks of buying and selling a business before a deal goes ahead

ISSUES FOR SELLERS

A BUSINESS owner is likely to have shed blood, sweat and tears in making their business as successful as possible. Unless it is a family business and the next generation is ready to pick up the reins, these efforts will hopefully culminate in selling the business or, for the more ambitious, floating it on a stock exchange.

In light of this almost inevitable endgame, it is surprising how few business owners are prepared for the issues and procedures which will be relevant when the time for exit arrives. Being underprepared may result in receiving less than full value for the business.

Business owners must plan for their exit well in advance. Some of the most important things to ensure are also the most obvious, but that does not always mean they are observed.

The business structure must be established in a way which makes the sale as straightforward as possible. For example, if the business is operated through a company, are there any divisions, properties or assets which need to be extracted from the company before a sale?

All corporate and commercial documents relating to the business must be complete and up to date. They will be scrutinised during a buyer's due diligence, so do not give the buyer any excuse to delay or renegotiate the terms of the sale.

Key employees of the business should be signed up to employment contracts which comply with current employment legislation and contain enforceable restrictive covenants. The employees may be a valuable ingredient in the business, so a buyer will want to be satisfied that they are tied, as well as they can be, to the business.

If the business relies on unique intellectual property rights, it is imperative to ensure that these rights are protected as much as possible, whether by way of patent, trade mark, registered design rights, copyright or even simple confidentiality provisions.

Careful tax planning will also be key. The sale of shares in a company will almost certainly result in a lower tax bill for shareholders compared to the company selling its business and assets. This is because the company will have to pay corporation tax on its gains before the balance of proceeds can be distributed to its shareholders. However, there are exceptions to this rule, so always review the position early with a tax advisor.

When approaching potential buyers, it is important that sellers do not disclose too much information without first procuring signed confidentiality undertakings from the recipients of any information, to protect the business' trade secrets, customer and employee lists, pricing policies and other sensitive information.

Debenture

If a buyer makes an offer which includes an element of the purchase price being payable after the date of sale (possibly on an earn-out basis), the seller should consider what protection they require.

For example, should the buyer provide some form of security over the deferred element, such as a bank guarantee or debenture? If the deferred amount is dependant on future turnover or profits of the business, should there be provisions requiring the business to be conducted in the same manner as it was conducted before the sale? Careful consideration should also be given to the tax implications of any deferred element of the purchase price because, without careful planning, it is possible that tax will be payable on the full value of the purchase price, even if only some of it is paid on the date of sale.

There are many additional issues which need to be considered by sellers before they embark on the exit process, but hopefully this articles highlights a handful of the most significant factors.

• *Nicholas Gabay, Partner Corporate & Commercial Department, Thomson Snell & Passmore.*



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A share of the wealth

By **JEREMY GATES**

AS A new year begins, the search for shares and managed funds with 'hot' prospects will continue for small investors seeking to supplement their income.

In the Noughties, the game lost much of its sparkle. It's been a grim time for shares, especially those in banks once seen as solid and reliable, such as Lloyds TSB, Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS. In 30 months of financial mayhem, income and capital gains from shares have plunged.

Well-regarded blue chips sank too, although many bounced back in the 54 per cent surge by London's FTSE 100 index since March.

The turmoil may not yet be over. Savers nearing retirement may be reluctant to touch equities at all, in case they sink to the lows that London prices hit in early 2009.

Despite the doom and gloom, however, small investors still hold £162 billion of shares, says Capita Registrars.

And with minimal returns from rival investments such as property and savings accounts, people trying to build a lump sum to allow earlier retirement will want some money in shares – or funds that hold mostly stocks.

Caution is the watchword with most pundits. Nobody knows how share prices will respond when the Government's policy of quantitative easing is eventually switched off.

Jonathan Jackson, head of equities at broker Killik & Co, has some FTSE 100 giants in his Top Ten for 2010, including GlaxoSmithKline, BG Group, Barclays, hedge-fund manager

Man Group and FT owner Pearson. Most of these pay good dividends, around five per cent, even if capital growth may be limited.

Killik's high-yielding portfolio, with firms from the FTSE 100, Mid 250 and Small Cap, pays an average dividend of 5.7

per cent, with limited downside risk short of financial armageddon. He predicts the FTSE 100 will be at 5,850 by the end of 2010, about eight per cent up on the current level of 5,400.

Richard Hunter at discount broker Hargreaves Lansdown is slightly more hopeful. He sees the Bank of England base rate at 1.5 per cent by December, and the FTSE 100 around 6,000 in 12 months' time.

He plumps for BP (paying 5.5 per cent), Tesco, Home Retail (owner of Argos/Homebase) and one of the pharmaceutical giants, either GlaxoSmithKline or AstraZeneca.

Among tiddlers, he likes Davis Service Group, a £700 million company trading as Sunlight in the UK and Ireland to provide uniforms and workwear to a range of companies.

Globally, Hunter thinks 2010 could be the year when the economic might of China is widely recognised.

Tim Steer at the Artemis UK Growth Fund is backing firms focused on change – among them oil minnow Sterling Energy, listed on

London's junior AIM market. He also likes Ricardo, focused on improving fuel efficiency for the automotive sector.

Peter Saacke, fund manager at Artemis Global Growth, thinks 2010 will deliver higher income from shares as dividends recover. His core holdings include Cobham, Northumbrian Water and Imperial Tobacco.

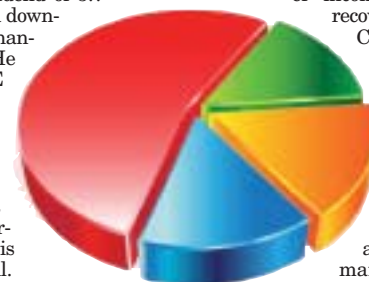
In an atmosphere of huge uncertainty, there are attractions in making monthly payments into managed funds: if share prices, investors buy more shares with the same subscription.

Choosing a specialist fund is also an easy way into global markets where most investors know little about specific shares.

Emerging markets boomed in 2009, notably the BRIC chain of Brazil, Russia, India and China. Neptune's Russia & Greater Russia, launched five years ago and heavily invested in oil, mining and gas companies, was a top-performing fund in 2009, soaring by 107 per cent. Alliance RCM BRIC Stars had another great year with an 80 per cent surge.

Can they keep it up? As the developing world continues to grow, demand for raw materials grows too – which might be a case for backing JP Morgan Natural Resources, up by more than 600 per cent in the past decade.

Virgin Money's Investor Intentions Index says emerging markets pushed UK shares to second place in advice given by financial advisors during 2009, but some doubt this surge can be maintained. In any case, investors bruised by 2007-09 might choose safe funds for 2010, rather than those set to soar.



VALUES: Investors need to choose between the safe bet and the big surge

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Twelve ways

BY JEREMY GATES

MANY families who cut back on spending in 2009 on the assumption of recovery in 2010 may already be having a rethink, and are looking for fresh ways to prune the budget after warnings another 250,000 jobs could go in the new year.

Unemployment could hit three million by mid-summer, says the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) – partly because of rising inflation and the rise in VAT. Counting the pennies this year could be more important than last.

"People should review their finances on a regular basis and the turn of the year is a great trigger to do just that," said Clare Francis at moneysupermarket.com.

"For those suffering an extra financial hangover from the festive period, recovery will be quicker in 2010 if significant savings are made."

Ms Francis estimates an average household could save £4,000 a year, simply by getting the cheapest deals in those areas of spending few of us can avoid, like mortgage repayments and energy bills.

Here are a dozen spending checks which any household can make.

1. Mortgages – use low interest rates to overpay your mortgage, while 'interest only' borrowers who switch to capital repayment terms with their current lender may be surprised by savings in the long-term.

Moneysupermarket.com estimates that somebody paying an extra £50 per month on a capital repayment could save £40,000 over the 300-month life of a mortgage.

Andrew Hagger at Moneynet.co.uk points out that switching lenders might not be worth it for those with small loans, because of the hefty fees incurred. Above £70,000, though, it might be worth looking at cheaper fixes, including a Leeds BS five-year fix at 4.75 per cent or Mansfield BS's two-year fix at 3.59 per cent.

Don't linger on a Standard Variable Rate (SVR) loan because rates are likely to rise this year. Someone with a £150,000, two-year mortgage at Coventry BS fixed at 3.5 per cent would save £2,278 against the average SVR rate.

2. Get the cheapest loan – Nationwide BS thinks many consumers with debts spread across credit and store cards, overdrafts and loans could save by consolidating the debts into its new personal loans costing a typical 7.6 per cent APR on £7,500-14,999 for up to five years, the rate being fixed for the full term of the loan.

This undercuts the 7.9 per cent offer on £7,500-15,000 advances, with Nectar points, unveiled by Sainsbury's Finance.

3. Credit cards – if you can get your card debts accepted for a zero per cent balance transfer deal, there's a case for cutting the card up to ensure you don't make new purchases, possibly charged at 16 per cent.

4. Be a careful shopper – write down what you need before entering the supermarket, and you can easily save £20 per week, says Andrew Hagger at Moneynet.co.uk. That's worth £1,000 a year, which you can use to pay off debts elsewhere.

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FAMILY MATTERS: Parents must think carefully about how to provide for their children

By **JEREMY PASSMORE**

Thomson Snell & Passmore

Do you trust the children?

MANY people want to provide funds for their children and grandchildren, to help with all the varied calls for money they will experience during their younger years and into adulthood.

It is not always easy to know how best to structure any such provision. One wants to ensure that children have an appropriate degree of access to the monies, and that the structure serves to minimise the impact of taxes.

1. Bare Trusts – are arrangements where trustees are acting really only as nominees, with the beneficiaries having beneficial ownership of the monies.

Where funds are provided by grandparents, grandchildren can use their personal allowances for income tax and annual exemptions for CGT, which is likely to be better than if the monies were held by the parents or

grandparents. If the funds are provided by parents, however, income tax is assessed on them until the children reach 18.

A disadvantage is at 18 the children can call for the money which belongs to them; because it might be spent unwisely does perhaps mean such trusts should not be over funded, to leave an 18 year old with too much to spend. While they are under 18, the monies can be used freely for their benefit, including paying school fees.

2. Discretionary Trusts – are used when the amount is more than would be appropriate for the children to take at 18; or where it is intended that the funds should be held to give benefit to the beneficiaries until a greater age such as 25; or where one wants to have the ability to favour some beneficiaries over others. Such trusts are very flexible and can target the benefit at the appropriate time.

A disadvantage is the trustees will need to

manage the funds and produce a separate tax return; with a bare trust the income is simply treated as belonging to the child and only a tax repayment claim will be needed. Furthermore, income tax rates for trustees are now high, with a 50 per cent rate from April.

The effect of this is mitigated if the income is paid out to beneficiaries who are non or lower rate tax payers. Accordingly it would normally be best to fund the trust at the sort of level where income being generated can safely be paid out, to avoid the trustees retaining income and suffering tax at 50 per cent.

Once again there is a difference if the funds are provided by a parent, with the tax assessed on the parent if the income is distributed; but if the income is accumulated, then it will be taxed at 50 per cent! So if parents want to get funds out of their estates, perhaps for IHT reasons, it would be wise not to invest to

produce a high level of income while the children are under age, although once they reach 18 the rules change and income paid out to the children is taxed on them and not their parent.

3. Provision by will – grandparents can bypass their children and set up trusts for grandchildren in their wills. The parents will probably benefit indirectly from the funds available and the trust can be drafted so the children's own personal tax position can be taken advantage of.

This will not happen if the fund is below the nil rate band threshold, currently £325,000. If someone wants to set up a larger fund, then there are ways to avoid any IHT charge by giving the children a right to income.

The circumstances and requirements of families differ greatly; one needs to think carefully about what one is trying to achieve and to structure gifts to achieve that in the most appropriate and tax effective way.

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Open a new car savings account

BY **STEVE LOADER**

THERE may be a glimmer of light at the end of the recessionary tunnel, but is it too soon to think about a new car?

No. In fact, there was a strong argument for some of us to buy new wheels even in the worst depths of the downturn and those circumstances continue to prevail.

With savings accounts earning so little, you might make more by saving a huge wedge on a new car thanks to big discounts at the moment.

Fact is, there has been much hype about the Government-sponsored £2,000-a-time Scrappage grant scheme, but dealers have been knocking cash off cars for months – whether you have a 10-year-old ‘scrapper’ to trade in or not.

There are other deals that can be factored in too, such as zero or low rate finance.

And don't forget to ask for trimmings like a tank of fuel, car mats or further discounts on any add-ons you fancy.

Do your homework though to ensure you are not buying an unpopular engine or trim combination or, worse, a car on ‘run-out’ where production ceased a while ago.

After all, you don't want to trade your old gas guzzler for another just as thirsty or likely to depreciate badly.

Buy wisely though and your new vehicle could save on fuel, insurance, road tax and even depreciation, though cars always

devalue unless they achieve classic status.

You can also afford to congratulate yourself for ditching something less efficient in favour of a modern and more eco-friendly model.

On the other hand, review your proposed part-exchange; a knee-jerk disposal and the cost of replacement, could be daunting even when judged against its high running costs for the next three years and eventual disposal when the market is more settled.

Budget

Road tax favours downsizing – gas guzzling limos or 4x4s face £950 a year road tax from April 1 next year – but this is still a small part of the motoring budget for most of us.

Many superminis currently sit in the lowest road tax band of £35 a year and though you might be tempted by new tax-exempt diesel eco models, just check the price against a standard version.

The eco supermini might save £105 road tax over three years, but how much will you pay upfront for it? A lot more and you might not think the driving experience worth paying extra for either.

Be aware too that from April 1, all cars emitting 130g/km or less will be zero-rated for tax in their first year on the road.

So, check out conventional equivalents of eco models and don't dismiss petrol power; the fuel is still cheaper and makes sense for lower mileage users, while emission and consumption levels are closing the gap on their heavier diesel equivalents.



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Motability

Official Government Environment Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO2 emissions (g/km). Matiz 0.8 S 5dr: Urban - 43.5 (6.5), Extra-urban - 68.9 (4.1), Combined - 56.5 (5.0). CO2 emissions 119g/km. Vehicle shown features mica paint available at extra cost of £325. 3 years/30,000 miles full service package at an optional cost of £249. Available at participating retailers only. Not available in conjunction with any other offers. Savings against current man. rec. price and available on UK supplied vehicles ordered and registered before 31st January 2010. Prices correct at time of press. (Chev79242). Scrappage Allowance subject to eligibility, please ask for terms and conditions.

Essential guide to where you can save

■ Northgate Alfa Motors in Canterbury is offering fixed price servicing for cars three years plus gold care £169

■ Robins and Day Motors in Rochester is offering MOT from £29.99. Service and MOT from £119.99

■ Canterbury Hyundai Motors in Canterbury is offering MOTs while you wait for £29.95

■ Village Hotel in Maidstone is offering 25 per cent off the joining fee for the leisure club

■ Cliftonville Tile Centre in Thanet is offering free adhesive and grout on all orders over 15 metres

■ Mayfair Drives in Rainham is offering up to 50 per cent off paving

■ Rare Breeds Centre in Ashford has a child goes free with every paying adult. Offer on now

■ Ashford Orbital Motors in Ashford is offering servicing from £99.95 inc VAT, all makes

■ Caffyns Tunbridge Wells Motors in Tunbridge Wells is offering half price MOT with service

■ Old Sawmills furniture store in Ashford has an oak computer desk and chair promotion – various sizes, styles and leather colours, plus free banker's lamp. Only £1,295

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CLASS: Alfa Romeo's dramatic MiTo supermini proves eco motoring need not be boring motoring



BY STEVE LOADER

DON'T swap your current car just to save a few pounds on road tax.

On the other hand, Government efforts to tax 'gas guzzlers' off the road can further ease the burden on your motoring budget if you plan to downsize or go for a more fuel-efficient model.

Chancellor Alistair Darling eased the pressure a bit after an outcry induced by draconian rates due to be applied to larger cars... just as the recession clobbered the economy.

But Labour – and a Conservative government won't be any different due to existing agreements to clean up pollution – has said it will continue to drive down vehicle sizes and emissions by using tough VED (Vehicle Excise Duty) rates, based on CO2 emissions rather than fuel consumption and applying only to cars registered after March 1, 2001.

At present, you can escape paying anything if your car emits 100g/km or less and, from April 1, this benefit will apply to any car with a 130g/km or less rating, within one year of being registered. After that it will revert to £20-30 a year.

By the same token, anyone buying a serious CO2 emitter discharging 255g/km or more will

TAX EXEMPT: Vauxhall has announced an improved Vauxhall Corsa, badged with its ultra-green ecoFLEX sub-branding, that is tax exempt thanks to just 98g/km emissions

Pros and cons of road tax savings

be clobbered by a £950 charge in the first year and £435 thereafter when the new scale comes into effect – the current tax for cars in this band is £405.

Curiously, due to inconsistent emissions data on older cars, these are taxed simply at £120/year up to 1,549cc and then £185 if larger – something of a bargain for owners of older 'gas guzzlers' if they can bear higher fuel bills, opt for a £1,500-2,000 LPG (liquid petroleum gas) conversion or cover relatively few miles. The higher charge increases to £205 after April 1.

ROAD TAX BANDS

Band A (0-100g/km of CO2) – £0
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Bands D and E (121-140g/km) – £120
Band F (141-150g/km) – £125
Band G (151-160g/km) – £150
Bands H and I (161-180g/km) – £175
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Band M (255g/km plus) – £405

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Smarter driving for better saving

BY **STEVE LOADER**

DOWNSIZING to a more fuel and tax efficient car must be just part of your recession-busting motor-ing plan.

The next stage involves smarter driving and journey planning and getting fitter by walking and cycling instead of using the car for short journeys – cold engines waste fuel and produce 60 per cent more emissions than warm ones.

Short trips also mean more servicing and engine wear – a moped or motorcycle might be a better option.

If you must drive, follow these tips from the Institute of Advanced Motorists and RAC Foundation:

- Plan your route to save strain on car and driver. Take the direct route – a sat nav can help – and go off peak if possible. Commuters should think about car sharing, Park and Ride bus schemes, or other public transport.
- Have your vehicle serviced regularly. Neglected engines waste at least 10 per cent more fuel and catalytic converters only clean emissions when properly maintained.
- Check tyres – under-inflated tyres wear faster, waste fuel, are dangerous and contribute to a growing environmental problem. Check pressures weekly.
- Obey speed limits to save and stay legal. Feather the throttle at cruising speed; 56mph uses 25 per cent less fuel than 70mph and a smoother driving style saves fuel.
- Accelerate briskly without racing the engine – pulling away too fast uses up to 60 per cent more fuel. Intelligent gear changes

at modest engine speeds can save up to 15 per cent in fuel.

- Reduce drag – remove roof racks and carriers when not in use and keep windows closed to avoid drag and wasted fuel. Remove unnecessary and heavy boot luggage and wide wheels and tyres that add rolling resistance. Air conditioning costs fuel too, so try to use the fan and vents unassisted.

- Buy green fuel and use less. Look for low sulphur 'city' diesel or cleaner petrol (low sulphur/aromatics). Consider converting to LPG

(liquid petroleum gas) – half the price of petrol and with lower emissions.

- Think ahead – there is no point rushing and then having to brake suddenly.

- Be a tank miser. Why fill the tank to the brim and burn more fuel carrying more weight than necessary?

- Stuck in traffic? Turn off the engine after two minutes to save fuel and emissions.

- For more eco driving tips see Julie Maddocks' online video report at:

<http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk/community>.



ECO-FRIENDLY: Driving more economically can also add to the savings you make from purchasing eco-friendly models like the Skoda Octavia Estate Greenline (above) or Nissan's 'Swiss army knife' Qashqai (right) – the car that can be family a hatchback, people carrier, SUV and even 4x4 if you buy a flagship model

Dark Horses.



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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km). Corsa 3-door SRi 1.4i 16v (100PS) manual: Urban – 40.4 (7.0), Extra-urban – 61.4 (4.6), Combined – 51.4 (5.5). CO₂ emissions 129g/km. Astra Sport Hatch Sport 1.4i 16v manual: Urban – 35.3 (8.0), Extra-urban – 56.5 (5.0), Combined – 46.3 (6.1). CO₂ emissions 146g/km.

Price shown includes £2000 Vauxhall Scrappage Allowance which is dependent on the vehicle meeting the full Government Vauxhall Scrappage incentive criteria. The Government Scrappage payment applies to cars registered on or before 29.02.00 (vans on or before 28.02.02) when traded in against a new car subject to conditions and whilst Government funding applies. Models illustrated are Corsa 3-door SRi 1.4i 16v (100PS) at £14,484 Man. Rec. OTR (offer price £9995 OTR) and Astra Sport Hatch Sport 1.4i 16v at £16,339 Man. Rec. OTR (offer price £11695* OTR). On-the-road (OTR) prices include number plates, delivery, 12 months' Government Vehicle Excise Duty, DVLA new vehicle first registration fee of £55 and VAT at 17.5%. Excludes fuel and insurance. Offers are available to private individuals, and small businesses 1-24 (purchase only). All other sales categories are excluded. Offers apply to selected new vehicles ordered or registered between 01.01.10 and 28.02.10, and are subject to status, eligibility, terms and conditions. Offers are available on selected Retailer stocks only, cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer, unless stated otherwise, and are available at participating Retailers only. Excludes Isle of Man and Channel Islands.

BY STEVE LOADER

FUEL prices continue to be volatile – no help to drivers as Britain tries to claw its way out of recession.

The UK's biggest supplier of company cars reckons this also comes on top of motorists being suckered by costly motoring myths.

Lex Autolease associate director Chris Chandler said: "We own over 300,000 vehicles and some of the feedback we receive from drivers shows that a lot of bad habits have crept in, due to myths passed down from one colleague to another or through friends and family."

The firm's 'Myths Hit List' is:

'Premium fuel is good for your car every now and again'

It is only suitable for high performance cars needing superior fuel for efficient running – the higher cost is repaid by better mpg. Drivers using non-performance cars should stick to ordinary unleaded and diesel.

Another myth suggests supermarket fuel is poorer quality than that from oil companies' forecourts, but they often come from the same source, so you're paying more for the brand and any additives included.

'It's best to fit your new tyres to the front axle' Actually, they should be fitted to the rear. More grip on the rear axle improves stability on slippery roads and could prevent a spin.

Drivers are also more used to worn tyres on the front, because most modern cars are front wheel drive and wear front treads faster than the rears; switching part-worn rears to the front maintains a balance that the driver is used to.

'Allow the car to warm up before driving off' The engine will warm up faster, use less fuel and pump out less CO2 if you drive off immediately, rather than leave it to idle for a while. In winter, this also helps the car heater warm faster, though windscreens must be fully defrosted before setting off.

'Running the fuel tank near to empty helps to clean it'

Motoring myths shattered – more savings pocketed



ON A ROLL: If you are buying two new tyres, they should be fitted to the back wheels say experts, as most modern cars are front-wheel drive, like the latest Vauxhall Astra and Mazda3 pictured here – new additions to the family hatchback sector.

Fuel tanks do not 'self-clean'. It is more likely that you will misjudge your next fill-up and risk seizing up your engine or other components; driving with little or no fuel can be almost as damaging to a vehicle as putting in the wrong fuel. Fill up as quickly as possible when your warning light appears.

'Filling up slows down your car'

Partially true. A heavy fuel load impacts upon fuel efficiency and braking distances, but accel-

eration and top speed is barely compromised by a full tank.

'No claims protection insurance protects my premium if I have a crash'

Standard insurances only protect the discount you would have received at the end of a claim-free year. If you have a claim, insurance companies can increase your overall premium, despite having a no claims protection policy, because you are an increased insurance risk.

Admittedly, the company has a vested interest in the final point:

'Leasing is more expensive than buying'

Many businesses and motorists fail to properly calculate the true cost of ownership. List price alone is a red herring, and ignores true running costs: finance, depreciation, maintenance and insurance.

All such costs can be better captured and budgeted through a lease deal.

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Last call for Scrappage?

BY **STEVE LOADER**

AFTER a stuttering start the Government's £2,000 Scrappage incentive accelerated into a big success last year.

So much so that the initial £300 million fund needed a 50 per cent top-up last autumn to avoid running out before the proposed end of the scheme in March this year.

But money is dwindling again, and it is difficult to read how the Government will react to another top-up or an extension.

It could be simply delaying a decision so that it can maximise the political mileage ahead of the spring general election, but it is also questionable whether the scheme does much for UK PLC or its balance of payments – foreign-based carmakers and their workforces have been the main beneficiaries.

So get your order in now before the cash



HIT: Scrappage made the frugal Hyundai i10 hatchback one of the UK's top sellers



NEW LOOK: Scrappage has tempted many people out of old cars and into sharp-suited affordable new ones like the Chevrolet Cruze

runs out if you fancy swapping your banger.

The donor car must have been registered before August 31, 1999 and your name must have been on the V5 'logbook' for 12 months before the date your new car order is placed.

Carmakers like the scheme, though quietly annoyed that they would be expected to contribute half of each '£2,000 Government Scrappage grant' and that the Treasury would claw back some of its money through VAT on each car sale.

But they have seen that they can use Scrappage to buy market share and keep car plants running through the recession, and some brands have been chipping in extra cash on top of their £1,000 per unit as well as more specification and zero per cent finance – though this is no big deal when interest rates are so low.

This also indicates how keen dealers are to

do business, so don't be despondent if you're not in a position to take advantage of Scrappage; with the exception of city cars and superminis, you should get a hefty discount on most new cars without a banger to scrap.

If you have been out of the car market for a while though, do your research. You will have heard that diesel cars now outsell petrol, but that is not the full picture.

They cost more, and the extra weight can be wearing and intrusive in the smaller cars most in demand now, and you need to cover many miles to recover the extra outlay.

Meanwhile, petrol is making a comeback with lighter, small capacity turbocharged engines able to deliver diesel pulling power and lower emissions.

You might also consider a hybrid, but these cost more and this must also be weighed against the mileage you intend to cover.

Essential guide to where you can save

■ Northgate Alfa Motors in Canterbury is offering fixed price servicing for cars three-years plus, for example bronze care, £109

■ Village Hotel in Maidstone is offering a free glass of wine or a pint with any main course in the Victory Pub

■ KOS Media is offering a saving of up to £40 on Slumberdown Memory Foam Mattress Toppers

■ FG Barnes Motors in Maidstone is offering £250 worth of accessories with Network Q purchases

■ KOS Media is offering the Ewbank Evolution II for £24.99, save £5 on RRP

■ Ashford Orbital Motors in Ashford is offering a winter check for £19.95 inc VAT, with free de-icer, ice scraper and screen wash

■ KOS Media is offering a saving of £30 on the leader MD Electronic Typewriter – only £169.99

■ Caffyns Tunbridge Wells Motors in Tunbridge Wells is offering an MOT for only £35

■ Sink Ports kitchens and bathrooms store in Maidstone is offering 10 per cent off kitchens

■ Maidstone Kia Motors in Maidstone is offering 10 per cent off all accessories

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Lovedays lead the way as Suburban Kings return

BY SIMON ROBINSON

THE monthly Suburban Kings club night returns next weekend with a Lovedays-led line-up.

The polished quartet will be joined on the Tap 'n' Tin's bill by Medway five-piece The Deccas, the very talented Archie Wah Wahs and teenage upstarts The Facades.

Usual Suburban Kings rules apply: the night will be topped off with club DJs, doors open at 8pm, entry costs £6. Drinks promotions help plug the band changeover periods.

While details of February's SK night have not been revealed, over-excited/incredibly-organised-for-a-band The Ambience have started promoting their appearance at the March SK night, pencilled in for March 6.

Support comes from The Bela Lugosi Blues, formerly known as The Mind Without Maths.

More acts will be revealed nearer the time. The March gig will see Suburban Kings turn four. Promoter Matt Harvey said he was delighted with how the night had grown.

"I never thought we'd be doing it for more than a year, never mind four," he said. "It has become a bit of an obsession for me; I really enjoy doing the artwork and finding the best local new bands - hopefully before all the other promoters in Kent!"

Matt said picking a highlight from the four years would be nigh-on impossible, but when pressed he said: "I guess the most notable act to have played is just making it big now, Ellie Goulding. She played for us more than two years ago and has just won a Brit award and been named one of the ones to watch for 2010



SUBURBAN: The Deccas and Lovedays (frontman Ben Jones pictured right) are at the Tap 'n' Tin next weekend

in pretty much every guide I've seen.

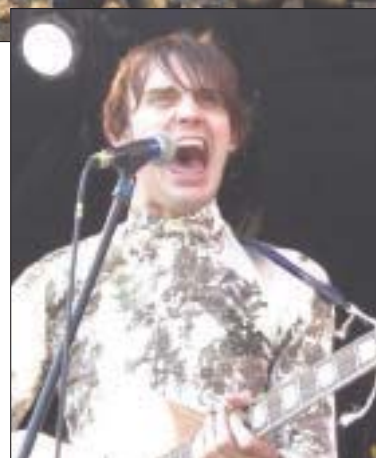
"It is discovering the new acts that I really enjoy. We had Underground Heroes really early on and the same with the likes of The Wombats, Smoke Fairies and Kid Harpoon."

Four years in, Suburban Kings shows no signs of running out of steam.

"This year we're looking at putting on more of the same nights," said Matt. "I'm really excited about a new band called Facades and solo singer-songwriter Natalie Evans."

"It'll also be interesting to watch the continued rise of other top local bands, like Onlookers and The Bela Lugosi Blues."

For information go to www.myspace.com/SuburbanKings.



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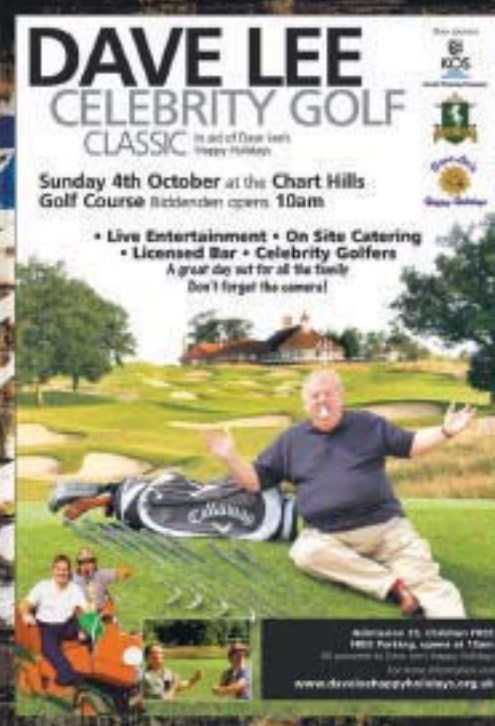
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YOUR TV REVIEW

BY HAYLEY ANDREWS

GLEE
E4, 9pm, Monday

GLEE is an American-born musical television series that has US audiences captivated, gripped and addicted.

Now it has come to our screens courtesy of E4 and it seems it's our turn to be wowed.

A 'glee club' is a show choir that performs jazzed-up pop songs and show tunes, often accompanied by choreography.

Glee is set at the fictional William McKinley High School in Lima, Ohio, where Spanish teacher Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison) takes the failing club, which is attended only by a handful of misfits and geeks.

Funny, abrasive, and absolutely adorable, each episode is interspersed with relevant musical numbers.

The plots resemble those of soap operas, but Glee stands out from other shows of its genre because of its quirky sense of humour, which makes light of topics that other serious dramas might get in a flap about.

The characters are wonderfully awkward, likable and in turn ridiculous. Many are pretty clueless and even the bad-guy characters have some spark and life that makes you want to watch.

Jane Lynch plays the school's drill sergeant-style cheerleading coach Sue Sylvester, with quips like: "I will go to the animal shelter and get you a kitty cat. I will let you fall in love with that kitty cat and then on some dark, cold night I will steal away into your home and punch you in the face" and "I will vomit down your back".

You can't help but laugh at her delightful nastiness.

Taking the show seriously is a mistake. Glee is not another High School Musical and is far from the disaster



SCHOOL'S OUT: E4 have taken Globe Golden nominated Glee and brought it to UK screens

that was ITV's Britannia High; rather it is a parody of such shows.

When gloomy EastEnders and tired Corrie are bringing you down, this serves as a tonic.

It's deliberately cheesy, purposely cringeworthy and mocks high-school politics.

The show is a celebration of individuality and of the misfit, which in the age of perfect-people Gossip Girl is revitalizing and delightful.

The fact the series was nominated for four 2010 Golden Globe Awards tells you more than I can.

Anything uplifting in today's grey society is more than welcome, if you ask me.

Fans of Glee are referred to as 'gleeks' and, as a self-confessed gleek, I would advise you to test the water.

Just don't overanalyse – take it for what it is and enjoy.

YOUR WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

BY RUSSELL GRANT



AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)

IT'S important to trust your instincts when it comes to a creative project. Although it might seem weird, it is compelling. Who cares if it hasn't been tried before? Your initial attempts will be disappointing, but keep going. You'll learn something new with each try.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aquarius** 09067-531762



TAURUS (Apr 21-May 21)

MAKE arrangements to go on a long-distance trip. Last year you craved excitement and adventure. Unfortunately, you had your nose stuck to the grindstone. Now you have a great opportunity to escape. You could find a terrific deal that will allow you to take an extended break.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Taurus** 09067-531753



LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)

GETTING specialised or technological knowledge will improve your employment prospects. As a general rule you prefer to focus on the big picture. This has gotten you to a certain level, but now you're ready to move to higher ground. This requires getting better qualifications.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Leo** 09067-531756



SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)

YOU will get fame and acclaim for your ideas. Normally, you prefer to sit in the shadows watching how things grow and develop, but now you're ready to take centre stage. Be ready to face-off with a stubborn man who thinks his methods are superior to everyone else's.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Scorpio** 09067-531759



PISCES (Feb 20-Mar 20)

YOU have a tendency to cut yourself off from the group when you become depressed. Joining a group project will restore your self-confidence. It's flattering to see people respond so well to your ideas. Besides, most people love the way you inject humour into the proceedings.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Pisces** 09067-531763



GEMINI (May 22-Jun 22)

IT'S necessary to be a little secretive, particularly when it comes to finances. If you get an extra sum of money stay mum about it. Normally, you have no problem sharing your good fortune with others. This time you've been longing to indulge your sensual desires.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Gemini** 09067-531754



VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)

FINDING an outlet for your creative talent is critical to your happiness. You're always looking for ways to be helpful to others. Now it's time to serve your own needs. If that means relinquishing some of your household responsibilities or relaxing your standards, so be it.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Virgo** 09067-531757



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 21)

IT'S time to sort out your finances, as dreary as that sounds. You've never been especially materialistic, which is admirable. Still, there are people relying on you for support. The simple act of getting your affairs in order can be of tremendous benefit to those closest to you.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Sagittarius** 09067-531760



ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 20)

THINK up some strategies to boost your career. Meeting with an executive can have exciting results. Going back to school, getting a license or attending a job fair will get the ball rolling. If you're going to progress, you need to take matters into your own hands.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aries** 09067-531752



CANCER (Jun 23-Jul 23)

WORKING as part of a team will yield better results than trying to go it alone. You have good ideas, but aren't sure how to make practical use of them. That's where your partner will come in. Although they can be rather bossy at times they know what they're talking about.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Cancer** 09067-531755



LIBRA (Sep 24-Oct 23)

FINDING ways to spend more time at home is critical to your happiness. You're tired of commuting long distances and going on extended business trips. If this means finding a different job or working from home then start making your plans now. Your family will be thrilled.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Libra** 09067-531758



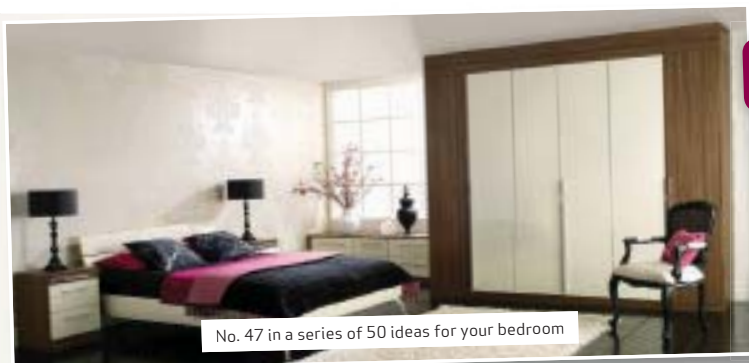
CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)

TAKING a short trip will give your reputation an unexpected boost. Maybe you'll get a chance to show off your creative ability. It's even possible you'll go on a job interview and make a favourable impression on the company president. This is just the sort of ego boost you need.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Capricorn** 09067-531761

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MEDIUM

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HARD

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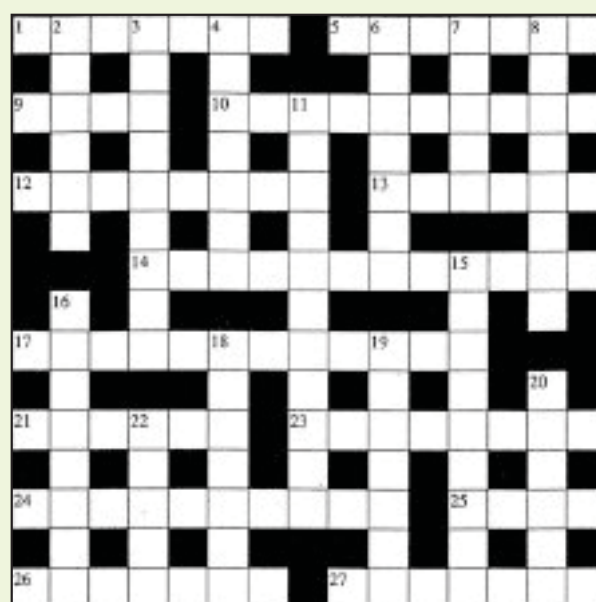
ACROSS

- 1 Fruity squelching? (7)
5 Why is he moving about? Because it is watery (7)
9 In Odessa, kirsch, alcoholic drink (4)
10 Nothing more than a religious rite in California (10)
12 Serviceman's order, duck (8)
13 Something that finishes everything found in Kendal latterly (3-3)
14 Informs Grant about changing from one medium into another (12)
17 Provider of power in a flash? (5,7)
21 Coming round with reference to some pithy sayings (6)
23 On which one must pay one's way (4,4)
24 Leader's joint office (10)
25 Extremely liberally included range of letters whilst averse to labour (4)
26 Record that is about Thomas' short summary (7)
27 State of the Empire? (3,4)

DOWN

- 2 In the capacity of bacon producer taking round clam (6)
3 I am a toxic monstrosity - that's self-evident (9)
4 No ahs with an unusual shout of praise (7)
6 He will welcome call to attract attention or call to exertion at sea (5,2)
7 Surrender profit (5)
8 Paying for various lettings (8)
11 Angry way with restless desire to do some needlework (5-6)
15 Graduate confused royalty in chief magistrate's office (9)
16 Enlisted, increased writing (6-2)
18 Doubly beastly fabric? (7)
19 Orbital path (7)
20 German tank Peter puts nothing on dropping round (6)
22 Test the heartless invader with choral composition (5)

SCRIBBLE HERE



QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Marked increase (7)
5 Loan (7)
9 Tot (4)
10 Valuing highly (10)
12 Discovered (5,3)
13 Attractiveness (6)
14 With great vigour (4,8)
17 Item of camouflage clothing (6,6)
21 Horselaugh (6)
23 Woody part that holds a nut (5-3)
24 In one continuous period (2,1,7)
25 Destroy completely (4)
26 Late day (anag.) (3,4)
27 Boasted (7)

DOWN

- 2 Amnesty (6)
3 Active feminist movement (6,3)
4 Mesh (7)
6 Refuse orders (7)
7 Entrance halls (5)
8 Unremitting (8)
11 Recklessly wasteful (11)
15 Leaving without reporting motoring accident (3-3-3)
16 Flirt (8)
18 Stood on high (7)
19 Technical expertise (7)
20 Gag (6)
22 Flintlock musket (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS No120

EASY

4	6	7	5	8	1	3	9	2
9	5	8	3	6	2	1	4	7
2	1	3	4	7	9	5	8	6
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8	3	9	0	4	5	7	2	1
3	2	6	7	5	8	4	1	9
8	4	5	1	9	3	2	7	6
7	9	1	8	2	4	5	6	3

MEDIUM

2	7	4	5	3	1	8	6	9
5	6	9	8	2	7	3	4	1
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8	5	1	2	7	6	9	3	4
4	3	6	9	5	8	2	1	7
7	9	2	3	1	4	8	5	6
5	1	5	7	8	3	4	9	2
3	2	8	4	9	6	1	7	5
9	4	7	1	6	2	5	8	3

HARD

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9	2	1	5	7	4	8	3	6
8	5	4	8	3	1	7	9	2
3	7	6	2	9	5	1	4	8
5	1	8	7	4	6	9	2	3
4	9	2	8	1	3	5	6	7

CRYPTIC SOLUTION No120

ACROSS: 1 Flight-deck 7 Body 9 Ebbw Vale 10 Squeal 11 Experiment 14 Redolent 15 Lyrical 16 Violet 18 Bulletin 20 Correspond 23 Stigma 24 Addition 25 Brer 26 Everywhere. DOWN: 2 Lobe 3 Gown 4 Trapeze 5 Eyespot 6 Kestrel 7 Blue murder 8 Diagnostic 12 Helicopter 13 Jolly Roger 17 To scale 18 Brocade 19 Lady Day 21 Itch 22 Four.

QUICK SOLUTION No121

ACROSS: 1 Upswing 5 Advance 9 Dream 10 Treasurers 12 Found out 13 Beauty 14 Like anything 17 Combat jacket 22 Guffaw 23 Acorn-cup 24 At a stretch 25 Kaze 26 Tea lady 27 Swanked. DOWN: 2 Pardon 3 Women's lib 4 Network 6 Disobey 7 Atria 8 Constant 11 Extravagant 15 Hit-and-run 16 Conquette 18 Towered 19 Knowhow 20 Muzzle 22 Fusil.

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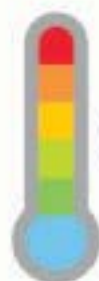
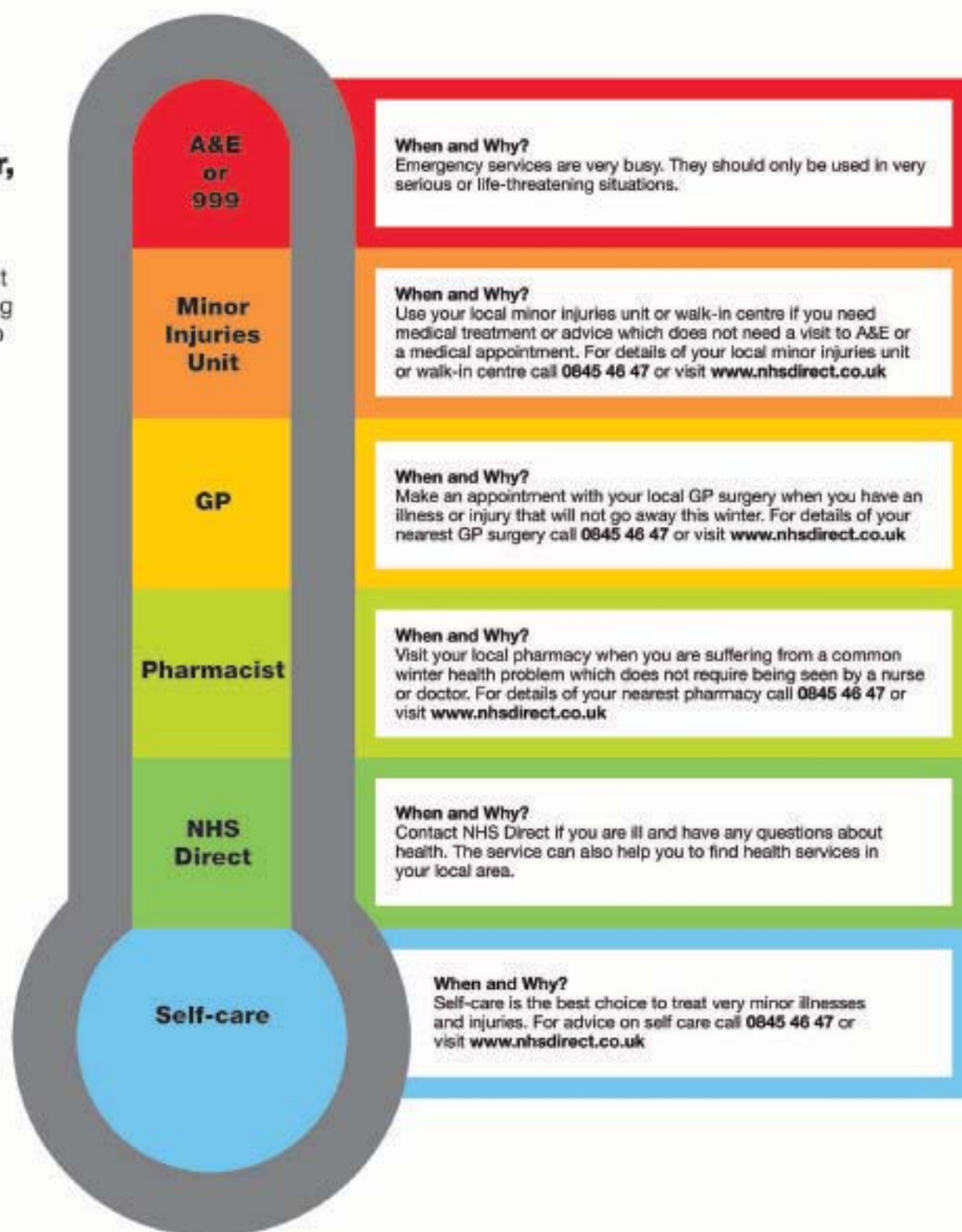
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Distinguished by an incendiary lead performance from Andy Serkis, Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll is a biopic of 1970s punk pioneer Ian Dury that is as unconventional and fantastical as the man himself.

THE ROAD (15)



The future isn't bright in John Hillcoat's Oscar-tipped, post-apocalyptic thriller, adapted by Joe Penhall from the novel by Cormac McCarthy, who also wrote No Country For Old Men.

UP IN THE AIR (15)



George Clooney plays a loveless man who earns his living by flying around America and making total strangers redundant in Jason Reitman's comedy drama.

Grown-up romance gets complicated

■ BY KATE WHITING

Most romantic comedies follow a basic plot of boy meets girl, but the title of Nancy Meyers' latest film suggests there's a lot more to relationships than that.

It's Complicated stars Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin as a middle-aged couple who start an affair – ten years after they got divorced.

Streep plays mother-of-three Jane, who owns a bakery and restaurant in Santa Barbara, California, and is on good terms with her ex-husband Jake (Baldwin).

The old flame begins to flicker again when they stay at the same hotel in New York for their son Luke's graduation, and end up reminiscing about their 19-year marriage over a drink or three.

With attorney Jake now married to a younger woman, Jane soon becomes the "other woman".

Things get even more complicated when it turns out that the architect helping to build Jane's dream kitchen, played by Steve Martin, is ever-so-slightly in love with her.

The film garnered a whole slew of Golden Globe nominations, including Best Actress in a Comedy or Musical for Streep, Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy, and Best Screenplay for writer/director Nancy Meyers.

Baldwin believes Meyers, who brought us Baby Boom, Father Of The Bride and What Women Want, has created something more mature than the standard romcom.

"To me, Nancy's movies are adult romantic comedies – they're a little more honest than



NOMINATED: Meryl Streep was nominated for a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Jane in It's Complicated

young people's romantic comedies," he says.

"Romantic comedies for young people seem to be a little crazy to me. Everybody is doing incredibly stupid things to try and get a laugh. And it is funny, but when you're appealing to an older audience, you need to be a little more dramatic, because the stakes are higher.

"But at the same time you have to keep it light, it is a weird balance to strike and Nancy is so good at that kind of movie."

Meryl Streep has recently carved herself a comedy niche, with memorable roles in

VIEW THIS PREVIEW

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Mamma Mia! and last summer's Julie And Julia, for which she won best actress at the Golden Globes awards ceremony.

She was the actress Meyers had in mind to play Jane – and she instantly loved the script and the screenwriter's sensitivity to such a universal subject. "Nancy has tapped into something deep about families who've encountered divorce... or anybody who has been abandoned by someone they love," says Streep.

But it was the draw of her leading men that proved irresistible. "They're just so wildly and inventively funny, I love them both," she said of Baldwin and Martin.

IT'S COMPLICATED 
Certificate 15

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Soak up the poetry of Grasmere

■ BY PAT HURST

GRASMERE'S most famous resident once described the Lake District village as "the loveliest spot that man hath ever found" – and two centuries later, the sentiment still holds true.

Of course, beauty is all around in this scenic part of Cumbria, but the great Romantic poet William Wordsworth did not overestimate its attraction one jot.

Sturdy boots, a bottle of water and some sun is all you need for a bracing walk up Helm Crag, the peak overshadowing the village.

Known as 'The Lion and the Lamb' or 'The Old Lady at the Piano', depending on which side you view it from, it is the first sight of Grasmere from the main road into the village.

Helm Crag is ideal for the beginner. The route is well-marked from the centre of the village, and, while the climb can be steep in parts, you needn't be a mountain goat to complete the walk leisurely in half a day.

Novices can expect to be overtaken by more serious Wainwright aficionados, decked out in waterproofs and equipped with poles – and all apparent retirees, who, to my shame, quickly disappeared over the horizon as our heavy legs called out for a rest and a cigarette break.

But for a little effort and some scrambling, the views over Grasmere towards Loughrigg fell provide the kind of panorama that inspired Wordsworth to write his poetry.

Some people might say that a real outdoor adventure should include a Primus stove, a sleeping bag and a tent.

But, rain-sodden, legs like jelly and footsore, I was more than happy to be watered and fed



BREATHTAKING: The scenic views at Grasmere inspired former resident Wordsworth to pen his romantic verse

at surely one of the Lake District's best hotels, the Rothay Garden in Grasmere, run by Chris Carss and his team.

The ground-floor bedrooms feature French doors with a small patio area leading out to the stunning gardens.

Master chef Andrew Burton has been at the hotel for 17 years, and his food was simply outstanding and beautifully presented, enhanced by the elegant candlelit setting.

With a menu changing daily, featuring dishes such as ballontine of quail, pan-fried pigeon supreme and Cartmel salt-marsh lamb, venturing outside the hotel to eat seemed a real shame.

Grasmere is, of course, synonymous with Wordsworth, who was most prolific during the many years he lived in the village.

Famously, in his best-loved poem, 1804's 'The Daffodils', he tells how he "wandered lonely as a cloud".

There is little chance of wandering too lonely in Grasmere these days – Wordsworth himself being one of the reasons.

Along with Rydal Mount, Dove Cottage – a Grade I-listed building – was one of his two homes there.

A fascinating guided tour is available, and England's literary history seeps from the cottage's white-washed walls.

His furniture, portraits and family chattels are all on display for you to see where the master poet sat down to write his immortal words.

Wordsworth lies with his family in graves in one of the village's greatest attractions, St Oswald's Church – a simple but pleasant stone edifice dating back to the 13th Century.

The lovely churchyard, with the River Rothay running beside, is a little oasis of quiet away from the busy narrow streets of the village, and well worth a visit if only to see Wordsworth's final resting place.

FACT FILE: GRASMERE

Time difference	none
Language	English
Population	42,000
Currency	Sterling
Religion	Christian

Travel facts

Pat Hurst was a guest of Rothay Garden Hotel, Grasmere, where standard rooms range from £90 to £110 per person per night (half-board), with loft suites from £155.

All bedrooms offer en-suite facilities, flatscreen satellite TV, free broadband and slippers.

Rothay Garden Hotel reservations: 01539 435334 and www.rothaygarden.com.

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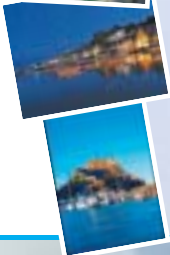
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	15-May	22-May	29-May	5-Jun	12-Jun	19-Jun	26-Jun	3-Jul	10-Jul	17-Jul	24-Jul	31-Jul	7-Aug	14-Aug	21-Aug	28-Aug	4-Sep
Villa Isis BB	£239	£239	£270	£277	£304	£311	£321	£321	£328	£338	£345	£355	£355	£345	£355	£334	£344
Mayfair / Metropole HFB	£393	£400	£417	£445	£465	£465	£489	£489	£489	£527	£527	£537	£537	£527	£537	£509	£519
Norfolk BB	£260	£260	£277	£284	£325	£325	£335	£335	£335	£345	£345	£362	£362	£359	£369	£362	£365
Runnymede Court	£323	£340	£340	£340	£360	£381	£391	£391	£391	£401	£429	£439	£439	£429	£439	£439	£435
Flight only	£99	£99	£109	£109	£129	£129	£139	£139	£139	£149	£149	£159	£159	£149	£159	£159	£169
No of seats available	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	48	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

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Flight times: 15:25/16:30 13:50/14:50 (Depart/Arrive)

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*Prices above do not include Transfers (£10 pp return) but do include baggage and check in fees and taxes. BB unless otherwise stated and 2 adults sharing.

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WOMEN seeking men

MAKE IT LAST Slim female, 25, 5'10", long brown hair and blue eyes, caring and social, likes clubs, cinema, seeking a kind male, 30-45 for a relationship. Box 461558

MATCH OF THE DAY! Fun-to-be-with, blonde female, 25, 5'12, a woman who loves football! Enjoys going out and staying in, to be her soulmate. Box 464594

NOT YOUR BROWN-EYED GIRL, BUT... Blue-eyed brunette, 27, 5'11, loves films, walking, darts, pool, singing, me time! Looking for honest guy with GSOH, to get to know. Box 880105

LOOKIN A GUY WHO'S EASY ON THE EYE! 25yr old female, 5'18, medium-curved build, NS, enjoys reading, painting, cinema, walks, WLM tall, attractive male, 23-32, for friendship. Box 462644

FANCY A CUDDLE? Loving single mum, 29, shoulder length black hair, brown eyes, 5'13, slim and sexy, part-time carer, looking for reliable, loving male. Canterbury. Box 464326

SOUND GOOD? Social lady, 29, likes walks, swimming, vgsch, like to meet a man, 30-55 for lots of fun. Brighton. Box 463884

IS ANYONE OUT THERE? 31yr old easygoing, independent female, WLM cuddly fella to enjoy the finer things in life, leading to LTR with the right person. Box 879591

A FAIRYTALE ENDING! Princess Fiona, 34, looking to meet her Shrek, 5'18, short brown/blonde hair, blue eyes, large build, seeks romantic caring guy for friendship, maybe more! Box 877957

HORSES FOR COURSES... Caring, loving, affectionate female, 30, 5'2", blonde, likes walking, horse riding, animals, seeks affectionate male, 30-40, for lasting, loving relationship. Box 384013

HAPPY DAYS! Attractive, fun-loving female, 35, 5'4", size 12, dark hair with blonde highlights, tactile, WLM intelligent, professional, attractive guy, for a happy relationship. Tunbridge Wells. Box 380734

FEAST YOUR EYES ON ME... Hello I'm Andrea, 35, petite 5'13, shoulder length curly hair, enjoys eating out, cinema and I'm looking for friendship and possible long term relationship. Box 453036

SEALED WITH A KISS Petite lady, 36, long hair, blue eyes, single mum, enjoys holidays, wine and dining, laughing, seeks loyal, loving man for friendship and more. Box 453079

STARRY NIGHTS Hello I'm Sarah, single mum from Kent, brown hair enjoys swimming nights in/out looking for a caring man to share the best thing in life. Box 878378

GROWN OLD WITH ME Single mum, 37yrs old, slim build, honest, kind and caring. I'm looking for LTR, love and romance with nice guy in Maidstone area. Box 860164

LOVE TO LOVE Lovely female, 36, 5'14, medium-large build, blonde hair, blue eyes, own house, likes walking, going out, the usual! Seeking male for long-term/serious relationship. Box 438102

HISTORIC MEETING? Mum of three, 36, long mousey hair, blue eyes, interested in historical places, music, eating out, seeks kind, caring, genuine male 36-49, non-smoker, for LTR. Box 460893

SEIZE THE DAY Loving female, 36, 5'14, brown hair, green eyes, likes socialising, staying in, seeks genuine male for friendship and more. Box 428666

CUTE AS CAN BE Cute single mum of four, 38, Kent-based, into most things, looking for friendship, possibly romance. Box 887983

FAMILY ORIENTATED Eastbourne based woman, 39, 5'18, slim/medium build. I'm a single mum, and enjoy cooking, music, family life. If you like the same, get in touch! Box 464034

AN AFRICAN DIAMOND 38yr old African girl, likes cooking, going out, watching films and dancing, seeking a loving and caring boy for companionship and more. Box 466676

DON'T LET ME DOWN Pretty, blonde female, 38, 5'14, like football, socialising and cooking, looking for a loving and caring male, 38-42, for a LTR. Box 466684

EASY TO LOVE Lovely African female, 39, 5'14, likes football, socialising, cinema, and cooking, looking for a loving and caring male for a LTR. Ashford. Box 460988

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SHOW ME HEAVEN Black lady, 38yr old, enjoys swimming, films and bird watching. Fairly new to the area, WLM a male for friendship and maybe romance. Box 441608

A NICE BOTTLE OF WINE Lovely glossy brunette, 39yr old, petite, bubbly and loving, enjoys theatre, music and eating out, WLM a professional, loving and tactile male for a relationship. Box 442551

TAKE A LITTLE TIME Social lady, 41, 5'3", gosh, likes family life, going out, cinema, walks, staying in, seeking a fun male for company. Sheerness. Box 461145

CAN'T SMILE WITHOUT YOU Professional female, 41, 5'11, brown hair/eyes, likes country pubs and walks, looking for a gent, 42-55, to share a happy future with. Gillingham Box 462538

FOR A RELATIONSHIP? Shy but confident-one known female, a mum, 40, likes socialising, tennis, walks, swimming, seeks gent with similar interests to find hopeful love with. Box 452106

TLC ON OFFER Bubbly, happy, outgoing 41yr old female, enjoy life to the full, like writing, walking, watching DVDs, WLM like-minded, happy-go-lucky, clean male for friendship and more. Box 459271

LOVE IS ALL AROUND Happy-go-lucky, bubbly blonde, 42, blue eyes, hard-working, love outings, looking for a nice, genuine guy for relationship. Bromley Box 454517

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YOU'RE THE ONE THAT I WANT Fun-loving lady, 42, 5'11, brown hair, green eyes, enjoy being out, doors, horse riding, pubs, cinema and sharing a nice bottle of wine, WLM you! Box 865096

HELLO EVERYONE! Single dog-owner, 42, fun-loving, kind and loyal, likes meals out, weekends away, country walks, WLM a non-smoking guy to share it all with. Seaford Box 454569

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL Good-looking brunette from Kent, 43, 5'11, likes bowling, eating in/out etc, looking for a good-looking guy, 35-45, with gosh for friendship/relationship. Box 450348

ANOTHER CHAPTER Hard working PA, 43, single mum, grey-green hair, loves socialising, a great enjoying life, seeks loyal, honest male to find love with. Sittingbourne. Box 461037

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOU? Single mum, 42, from Ashford, 5'19, dark hair/eyes, likes wine bars, pubs, days out and keeping fit, looking for a caring and fun-loving gent, 55+ Box 461129

STAY TRUE Attractive, curvy, single mum, size 18, 44, kind, genuine, 5'5", loyal, loving, seeking a man with similar qualities to share my life with. St Leonards-on-Sea. Box 461830

SWEET AS HONEY Petite, slim, honey-blond lady, 5'4" age 44, enjoys the seaside and horse-racing, looking for a dark-haired, genuine, honest and professional man, 25-50 in Brighton. Box 458465

HOW YOU DOING? Attractive, curvy single mum, 44, kind, genuine, loyal and loving, seeking a man with similar qualities to share my life with. St Leonards-on-Sea. Box 459128

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS Laid-back single mum, very bubbly, outgoing and intelligent, 43, enjoys social life, drinks, meals, cinema; looking to start afresh with someone new, easygoing and life-loving. Box 446102

ENJOY LIFE TO THE FULL Young-looking 46yr old female, 5'14, slim, blonde, non-smoker, affectionate, loyal, caring, seeking a male, 40-45, up to 5'17, to share life with. Ashford/Maidstone area please. Box 461938

YOUNG AT HEART Young 46, attractive, fun-loving female, looking for someone fit, handsome, intelligent, full of fun, sexy, Worldly Man to share everything that life has to offer. Box 884113

A REAL DIAMOND African lady, 47, honest, loving and caring, enjoys most things in life, looking for a male, 50+, for a LTR. Canterbury. Box 460999

MAKE A DATE Friendly female, 48, blonde, blue eyes, medium build, likes most things, seeking a nice, genuine male 48-52. Canterbury. Box 460951

MY PRINCE? Dog lover, into sports, walks, motorbikes, GSOH, female, 47, pretty, long dark hair, looking for knight in shining armour! East Sussex area. Box 872961

ARE YOU THE ONE FOR ME? Caring, cute female, 46, petite, likes socialising, dancing, travelling, good food, seeking intelligent, loyal man 42-52 for love and TLC. Seaford. Box 444366

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS! Young-looking lady, 42, 5'11, blonde hair, green eyes, medium build, likes life, socialising, the seaside, walks, drinks, WLM male to share a bottle of wine with. Box 444585

ETERNALLY YOURS Easygoing woman, likes most things in life, country walks, films, cinema, cooking, I'm 46, 5'12, medium build, WLM genuine, happy guy, easygoing and fun. Box 445635

STIMULATING COMPANY Bubbly, caring, single mum, 46, WLM nice male, for good conversations, company, and maybe more. Box 396829

ANY TAKERS? Divorced single mum, 49, 5'14, animal lover, happy go lucky, likes quiet drinks and cinema, looking for a man for friendship, maybe a LTR. Ashford Box 464557

MAKE IT ENJOYABLE Pretty, young-looking, slender woman, 49, dark-haired seeks reliable gentleman, 25-49 for a loving relationship. Rochester. Box 460686

ARE YOU LOVING AND CARING? Young 48 year old, loving, caring, very bubbly, 5'15, medium build, blonde, blue eyes, likes clubs, cinema, eating out, cosy nights, good company. Box 434089

THE RIGHT FIT Big lady (5'1), looking for decent, genuine man, I'm attractive, and very loving so go on, give me a try! I like cooking and family life. Box 862888

LAUGHTER, THE BEST MEDICINE Help me write my stand-up comedy routine! I'm 49, you'll need to make me laugh out loud and understand observational comedy to make the grade. Box 892640

JUST IMAGINE Petite, brunette, bubbly, friendly, easygoing single mum, 43, enjoys cinema, eating out, socialising, most things, WLM genuine male, to see where life takes us! Box 893562

HERE AND NOW Outgoing lady, 50, enjoys walks along the beach, nights out and in a quiet bottle of wine, seeks man to love forever. Box 449524

LOVELY BUBBLY Short 51yr old professional lady, likes history, films and reading, seeking a genuine gent, 45-58, with gosh to enjoy evenings out, stimulating conversations and fun. Box 452311

CARING & PROFESSIONAL Female 49, 5'14, long hair, slim build, likes eating out, the beach, travel, seeks a friendly chap, 48-55, Hastings. Box 417100

IT COULD BE US Happy-go-lucky lady, 53, 5'13, slim, blonde-brown hair, blue eyes looking for a tall, honest guy, for love and laughter and happy times. South Kent. Box 464601

WOULD LIKE TO BE HAPPY Looking for someone who enjoys the simple things in life, wind and rain in my face, 53, red hair, warm holidays love mowing the lawn. Box 860558

DO YOU HAVE THE BRAINS & THE LOOKS? Professional, attractive female, 54, enjoys the country, side, gardening, keeping fit, reading and live music, looking to meet an attractive and intelligent man for a relationship. Box 448863

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS! Smart petite lady, 56, 5'14, tall, blonde hair, green eyes, likes restaurants, theatre, cinema, travel abroad; seeking happy guy with similar interests. Box 448795

MAKE A NEW FRIEND Fun-loving lady, 58, 5'14, dark hair, single mum! Likes countryside walks, reading, cooking and cosy nights in, seeks similar male. Folkestone. Box 460420

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED Young-looking 60yr old lady from Gillingham, looking for a male for company and good times. I love animals and dining out. Box 463495

LOTS OF HUGS Positive woman, 60, independent but sociable, I'm 5'14, red hair/green eyes, slim build, Hythe, enjoys art and walks, seeking similar, intelligent man, lively, reliable. Box 464002

PISCES OR CAPRICORN? Star-struck lady, 59, 5'13, medium build, blonde, blue eyes, likes swimming, holidays, the sea; WLM tall man with good heart for love. Box 448240

MAKE ME LAUGH, MAKE ME YOURS Good-humoured lady, 59, medium build, long dark hair, likes socialising, music, dancing and walking, meals in and out, WLM similar male for love. Box 452450

BE YOURSELF Outgoing lady, 60, tolerant, open-minded, loves life animals, and genuine people, seeks a sincere man for romance. Margate. Box 865760

MUSIC TO MY EARS Hi my name's Christine, 59, 5'9", slim build, wear glasses, likes live music, theatre, playing darts, looking for slim build male, for friendship, possible more. Box 419914

WALKS ALONG THE COAST Honest & sincere female, 58, tall, GSOH, loves country pubs, coasts, cinema, seeking a man who's a match for me with GSOH for relationship. Box 441622

BRIGHTENING UP Cuddly lady, 51, 5'16, blonde, likes swimming, country pubs, cinema and much more, WLM tallish single man to hopefully brighten each others lives. Box 870214

ONLY LOVE Classy, intelligent, happy, slim, attractive, fit and active lady, 60, gosh, enjoys travel, gardening etc, looking for that special friend to share life with. Box 863791

SIMPLE PLEASURES Hi there, I'm a 51yr old lady, blonde hair/green eyes, medium build, I love dancing, walking by the sea and WLM like minded gent. Box 459467

LOVE ME DO Loving and caring lady, 63, 5'13, brown hair/eyes, likes most things in life, looking for a caring and considerate male for friendship, hopefully a LTR. Margate Box 460082

FIGHTING FIT? Very young 64 year old lady, many interests, loves socialising, walks, music, dogs; seeks intelligent, unpretentious ex-forces/fireman male? For committed relationship. Maidstone. Box 462717

PUT SPARK INTO LIFE Caring slim female, 64, 5'12, like meals out, cinema, walks, gardening and golf, looking for a kind and loving companion. Box 450561

LET'S FALL IN LOVE Lovely female, 65, 5'12, enjoys walking, bird-watching, cinema, theatre and red wine, seeking a male companion to share life with. Box 444763

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MEN seeking women

HERE FOR YOU Decent outgoing lad, 19, likes sports, keeping fit, drinks with mates, meals, holidays, travel, theatre... seeking similar girl for loving romance. Box 455724

MAKE A DATE Canterbury chap, 28, wicked sense of humour, caring, cuddly and open-minded seeks companionship and more. My perfect evening... sofa, movie, chocies, a bottle of red. Box 863206

GET BACK TO ME! Canterbury male, 30, 6'1, dark hair and blue eyes, good looking, laid-back, honest, reliable, GSOH, seeks similar lady for fun, friendship and more. Box 460229

LET'S BE HAPPY TOGETHER Professional male, 32, 6'12, medium build, likes golf, football and snooker, WLM a female with a great personality for everlasting happiness. Box 464121

HURT NO MORE Honest sincere male, 35, 6'11, blonde hair/blue eyes, slim, likes the usual pubs, clubs, meals, golf and films, seeks fun lady for honest relationship. Aylesford. Box 462866

TAKE THE PLUNGE Slim, sporty male, 35, 6'11, blue eyes, blonde hair, likes sports, football, pubs, clubs, romantic night in/out, seeking a caring lady for a LTR. Aylesford. Box 460136

ENDLESS LOVE Athletic male, 36, 5'10, professional, looking for a fun, lively and outgoing female to meet with, gosh is a must! Box 863555

BOTTLE OF WINE Hi there, I'm an easygoing male, 35, 5'10, medium build, brown hair, I'm based in Brighton and enjoy seeing friends, drinks, cinema, walks. Box 450165

JUST ASK Fun-loving male, 36, looking for real friend to share good times with, and maybe develop beyond. Maidstone. Box 863663

SEEKING MY MATCH Single dad, 39, 6'1, dark hair, nice looking, loyal, honest, separated, looking for a loving, honest, fun-loving lady. Eastbourne. Box 458880

FULLY HOUSE TRAINED! Happy-go-lucky divorced single dad, 40, slim/medium build, 6'1, dark hair, love motorcycles, family time, cooking, WLM female, prefer single mum, to enjoy life with. Polegate. Box 864778

BEING WITH YOU I'm an honest, easygoing, young-looking, fit male, 40s, 5'10, love live music, eating out, theatre, cinema and pubs, seeking a like-minded female. Box 893760

MAKES YOUR MARK Hi I'm Mark, 40, 5'18, brown hair and eyes, fit, not ugly, mature, honest, WLM someone trustworthy and caring. Box 448372

TO ENJOY LIFE Hi I'm Mark, 40, 5'18, brown hair and eyes, fit, not ugly, mature, honest, WLM someone trustworthy and caring to settle down with. Box 448377

SO HAPPY TOGETHER Single male, honest and caring, 5'6" non-smoker, 41, likes football, tennis, walks, music, the simple things in life would like to share them with you. Box 462848

HOW ABOUT TODAY? Looking for love and relationship with nice, genuine woman. I'm male, 42, 5'18, brown hair/blue eyes, enjoys cycling, films, eating in and out. Kent. Box 463958

STARTING ANEW Professional 42 year old, recently separated after a 23 years marriage. Likes the finer things in life, looking for someone who wants a relationship. Kent area. Box 865841

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THE REAL THING Happy-go-lucky, fun-loving male, 42, 5'19, brown eyes, medium build, likes nights out/in with a can of coke, seeking similar female for companionship. Box 441762

BE THERE NOW Old romantic, loyal, honest, 43, 5'17, brown hair, blue eyes, likes most things, WLM female to settle down with and find love. Box 443410

FALL FOR ME Single male, dark hair, blue eyes, 5'8", 44, easy going, loving, like cooking, holidays, music, countryside, cinema, seeking lady 34-57 for a loving relationship. Ashford. Box 464746

COSY NIGHTS Male, 45, divorced, 2 sons grown up, I'm of slim build, with brown hair/eyes, attractive. I like walks, socialising, meals out etc. Hastings. WLM genuine lady. Box 458975

HI LADIES Young 47 year old chap, single, 6'11, slim/medium build, easy going, thoughtful, quiet, fit, looking for a similar lady for friendship, and hopefully lasting relationship. Box 494480

TRY ANYTHING ONCE Tall chap, 44, medium build. Interests: walking, reading, swimming. I would love to meet a nice, honest and caring lady. Box 444568

SHARE THE GOOD LIFE Professional male, 45, own home/car, likes cinema, weekends away, the coast, a BBQ and good wine, looking for friendship, hopefully more. Box 462602

LOOKING FOR MY LADY Active guy, young 47, professional, likes theatre, the countryside and photography, loves travelling, hoping to meet a mature warm hearted lady for life-long romance. Sittingbourne Box 860916

GAINING CONFIDENCE 47yr old chap, Brighton based, have my own company and I enjoy most things in life, seeks a fresh start with a genuine local lady. Box 463623

GET BACK TO ME Good looking divorced man, 48, 6'1, likes keeping in shape, love music and gigs; seeking slim lady, 30-40, relaxed, laid-back, hopeful good relationship. Hythe. Box 460338

SHARE LIFE Kind, caring male, 50, 5'15, I love music, films, sport, looking to meet someone to enjoy life, hopefully a nice, genuine lady in the chatham area. Box 464728

SENSE OF HUMOUR A MUST Very young looking male, 52, slim, brown hair and eyes, 5'7, looking for a nice young lady over 30 for romance and good times together. Box 860085

LOVE AND LAUGHTER. Male, 55, 6'1, good sense of humour looking for a soul mate and best friend as well as a lover. Must be single and honest. Box 863979

FIT LADY WANTED Canterbury area, I'm male, 54, 5'10, fit and active, attractive, I'm outgoing with a GSOH and enjoys meals out, nights in, animals, female company! Box 464416

PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING Understanding, caring, single, 54, male, 5'10, medium build, grey hair, enjoys beach walks, cinema/theatre, bowling, darts, looking for lasting relationship. Canterbury. Box 462892

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PROPERTY NEWS

House prices up for sixth time, says bank

IN its latest survey of the UK housing market, Halifax reports that in December, house prices increased for the sixth consecutive month.

The rise took the value of a typical home to £169,042, up 9.4 per cent – or £14,552 – on the low of April 2009, and 1.1 per cent higher on an annual basis.

Taking the three-month-on-three-month measure, prices rose for the second successive quarter; in the final three months of 2009, the average value of a home increased 3.5 per cent, marking the biggest quarterly jump since 2006.

The lender comments that significant interest rate cuts have “markedly reduced the burden of servicing a mortgage” and helped to stimulate demand, albeit from a low base.

However, Halifax expects house prices to remain flat in 2010 as prospects for depend on how the UK economy performs, and whether there is a significant increase in the supply of properties.

By way of comparison, Nationwide recently reported that the average house price rose by 0.4 per cent in December, compared to a month earlier, to £162,103. According to the building society, the increase took the annual rate of gain to 5.9 per cent.

No repayment fee for buy-to-let borrowers

LANDLORDS with cash to spare will be interested in Bradford & Bingley's offer to waive early repayment charges.

From February 1 buy-to-let borrowers can pay off a capital lump sum, or redeem their mortgages early, at no extra cost.

A similar waiver proved popular last year and its reintroduction forms part of a strategy to wind down the mortgage books of both lenders, as they will eventually be liquidated.

For landlords tempted to remortgage, lettings agent Leaders has this week reported “a small but significant increase in buy-to-let mortgage products”.

However, proposals for the Financial Services Authority to begin regulating the sector this year could stifle recovery in what has become a severely contracted market.

According to Paragon Mortgages, the number of buy-to-let products available has collapsed to about 190, with 94 per cent of loans disappearing since the onset of the credit crisis.



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Best-buy mortgage table shows rise in competition

■ BY NICK AMES

THE Alliance & Leicester, which has branches across the county, has been named the most consistently competitive mortgage lender during the final quarter of 2009, according to research by mortgage search software firm, Evaluate Technologies.

A&L replaced HSBC as the UK's most consistently competitive mortgage lender during the quarter, despite having failed to register any of its home loans in best buy tables during the previous quarter.

Analysis

In the analysis, A&L achieved a score of 23 and beat off rivals including First Direct on 19 points, Woolwich on 15 and fourth with 14 points was HSBC.

However, Royal Bank of Scotland and subsidiary NatWest failed to put in a “best buy” appearance, as did Halifax and Cheltenham & Gloucester, said Evaluate.

Julie Speed, national accounts director at Evaluate Technologies said: “The changes taking place at the top of the best-buy tables indicate a good degree of competition in the mortgage market.”

“This is going to be key to supporting the property market in 2010.”

“Brokers will have been particularly pleased to see Alliance & Leicester's emergence, showing that lenders do value the intermediary market.”



COMPETITION: Alliance and Leicester sealed the deal for the most consistently competitive mortgage lender

Meanwhile A&L, along with Abbey and Bradford & Bingley, is set to be re-named Santander later this year.

Santander, which is the second largest banking group in the world after HSBC, became a

household name in the UK when it acquired Abbey for £9.5 billion, back in 2004.

In July 2008, it acquired A&L and a few months later, it took ownership of B&B's savings business and branch network.

Unemployment to hit house prices



HOUSING analysts Hometrack expects the housing market in England to feel the effects of rising unemployment in the months ahead.

The housing intelligence firm is predicting a one per cent fall in the average cost of a home in 2010, despite a rise of 0.1 per cent in December, which followed on from a 0.2 per cent increase in November.

However, December also saw the number of potential buyers entering the market fall by 2.2 per cent, the first decline since January 2009.

This month's increase eased the annual rate of decline to 1.9 per cent.

However, Hometrack's director of research, Richard Donnell, is convinced that rising unemployment and slow growth in household

incomes will take their toll next year. He concedes that a shortage of homes for sale will help to underpin prices, but expects demand to be the deciding factor in whether they rise or fall.

Meanwhile, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is taking a more optimistic view and predicting a one per cent to two per cent rise in UK house prices in 2010, despite a “flat” employment market and continued caution among lenders.

According to the RICS, supply should continue to increase in the early part of next year but will struggle to keep pace with demand.

The body also estimates that transactions will rise from between 55,000 and 60,000 per month in 2009, to 70,000 by the end of 2010.

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Ashford £94,950
Two bedroom first floor flat. Intercom entry system, inner hallway, bathroom, fitted kitchen, lounge/diner, gas central heating, double glazing, internal & external storage sheds.
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Ashford £115,000
Three bedroom semi detached house with no onward chain and is situated in the popular South Ashford area with transport links, shops and School nearby.
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Kent OIEO £160,000
1920's style three bedroom semi detached with through lounge/diner, kitchen, utility, downstairs bathroom and garage, garden, central heating and double glazing.
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Ashford OIEO £99,950
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Kennington OIEO £140,000
Terraced house is ideal for either a first time buyer, or a family. Three bedrooms with a fourth bedroom currently being used as a study/ office.
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Kennington £175,000
Two bedroom semi-detached bungalow. Two reception rooms. The garden has a southerly aspect and benefits from backing onto a small wooded area.
Ashford Office 01233 624561



Ashford £235,000
Four bedroom townhouse, two receptions, two cellars, development potential, central location, conservation road.
Ashford Office 01233 624561



Kennington £290,000
Three bedroom detached cottage style property. Set back from the lane, the property has private gardens, two receptions, cloakroom, county style finish to internal furniture.
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- Generous sized rooms.
- Parking. Outlook to fields.

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Willesborough

- Three bedroom semi-detached
- Kitchen/diner.
- Two parking spaces.

£155,000

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- Fantastic town centre location
- One bedroom top floor flat
- Use of the garden, part-double glazing

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Willesborough

- 3 bedroom detached house.
- Lounge/diner, kitchen and cloakroom
- Conservatory, bathroom.

£225,000

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- Three bedroom semi detached
- Double glazed, gas central heating,
- Cavity wall installation, garden.

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Kingsnorth

- Three bedroom end of terrace.
- Good size garden. Conservatory.
- Two parking spaces.

£162,950

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Willesborough

- Three bedroom detached
- Central heating, double glazing.
- Garage. No chain.

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Kingsnorth



£154,950

Modern two bedroom end of terrace house. Kitchen/Diner, Garage & Parking. No Forward chain.

Ashford



£165,000

A spacious four semi detached property with double glazing, gas fired central heating, cloakroom, driveway and rear garden.

Ashford



£177,500

No chain three bedroom spacious property in sought after Little Burton Farm in Kennington location.

Sellindge



£179,950

Attached cottage style house. Village location. Three bedroom. Living Room. Luxury bathroom. Modern kitchen.

Ashford



£179,995

Family home with three bedrooms in requested area. Front and rear gardens plus garage. Viewing are highly recommended.

Willesborough



£189,000

Priced to sell!!! Four bedroom: hallway, lounge, kitchen, conservatory and bathroom. Central heating, double glazing, grou cloakroom.

Ashford



£189,500

Victorian character home with modernised accommodation yet retaining period features. Approx. 70' rear garden.

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Lakemead £495pcm



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- Lounge
- Kitchen with appliances
- Off road parking

Baileys Field £495pcm



- 2 Bedroom Apartment
- Kitchen with appliances
- Lounge
- Bathroom

Lower Queens Rd £550pcm



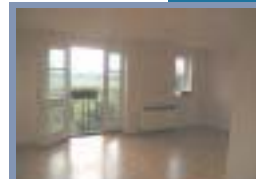
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- Lounge/ Diner
- Bathroom, Kitchen
- Walking distance to town centre

Lower Denmark Rd £595pcm



- 2 Bedroom House
- Living Room
- Dining Room, Kitchen
- Easy access to train station

Riverbank Way £595pcm



- 2 Bedroom Apartment
- Master with en-suite
- Spacious Lounge/Diner
- Bathroom

Reedmace Close £625pcm



- 2 Bedroom House
- Off road parking
- Fitted Kitchen
- Popular Singleton location

Guernsey Way £625pcm



- 2 Bedroom House
- Lounge
- Kitchen with appliances
- Cloakroom

Marmion Way £725pcm



- 3 Bedroom House
- Master with en-suite
- Kitchen with appliances
- Easy access for M20

Grasmere Road £725pcm



- 3 Bedroom House
- Kitchen, Lounge/Diner
- Conservatory
- Family Bathroom

Ripley Road £750pcm



- 3 Bedroom House
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- Downstairs W/C
- Fitted Kitchen

Haywards Close £795pcm



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- Garage
- Conservatory

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Ashford £160,000



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- Utility Room & Study
- Central Heated, Double Glazed

Challock £180,000



- Character Cottage
- 2 Bedrooms
- Wood Burner, Garden
- Double Glazed Windows

Gore Hill £204,995



- Four Bedroom Detached House
- Cloakroom With Shower
- Dining Room, Fitted Kitchen
- Viewings Highly Recommended

Little Burton £225,000



- Three Bedroom Link Detached
- En-Suite, Fitted Kitchen
- Lounge & Dining Area
- Landscaped Garden

Kennington £325,000



- Four Bedroom Detached House
- En Suite, Cloakroom
- Separate Dining Room
- Garage & Off Road Parking

Park Farm £142,500



- 2 Bedroom Mid-Terrace
- Lounge & Modern Kitchen
- Cloakroom, Bathroom
- Gas Heating, Double Glazing

Kennington £160,000



- Two Bedroom Bungalow
- Lounge & Kitchen
- Bathroom, Gardens
- Central Heating, Double Glazing

Woodchurch £160,000



- Retirement Park Home
- Age Restricted For 55 Yrs +
- Two Bedrooms
- En-Suite & Bathroom, Lounge

Kennington £199,995



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- Lounge With Double Aspect
- Superb Kitchen, Bathroom
- Gas Heating And Double Glazing

Bridewell £175,000



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- Lounge & Kitchen
- Front & Rear Gardens, Driveway

Park Farm £299,995



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MOTORS NEWS



Goodbye to scrappage deal – hello swappage

SCRAPPAGE grants are fast running out, so we can expect carmakers to find other incentives to maintain market momentum.

Under Toyota's new 'Swappage' scheme, customers can still snap up a Scrappage-style £2,000 saving on an eligible new Yaris, Auris or Avensis (pictured) if they trade in their old car. It must be seven to ten-years-old – registered between March 1, 2000 and February 28, 2003 (52-plate) – but it will not have to go to the crusher, as under the Scrappage scheme.



Audi's precocious baby car is a guaranteed hit

EXCITEMENT generated by Audi's new A1 baby car has led to a pre-launch trophy – What Car? magazine's Reader Award – Most Exciting Car.

The A1 will not even be unveiled in production form until early March at the Geneva Motor Show.

What Car? editor Steve Fowler also expects it to be a contender for the mag's 2011 Car of the Year Award, saying: "A funky small car with an Audi badge on the nose and aimed directly at the (BMW) Mini can't fail to succeed."



Citroën goes posh with its new year C1 range

MORE luxuries are predicted in small cars as economy motoring and downsizing gathers way.

Citroën illustrates the point with a posh 2010 version of its C1 city car. The new VTR+ trim level (from £9,345) replaces plain old VTR, highlighted by the 'Leather Pack': part leather/part Alcantara upholstery, steering wheel and gear knob.

For tighter budgets, the C1 line-up starts at £8,495 and the Splash Special Edition (from £9,045) continues with air con and remote locking as standard.



MONSTER TRUCK: Skoda reckons there are many Yeti customers out there, particularly in the new 'crossover' sector identified by Nissan's Qashqai which has proved popular

Yeti 'find' can cash in on Nissan's Qashqai appeal

SKODA has headed off into the rough stuff with the new Yeti.

It may be smart marketing to name a rugged looking SUV (sports utility vehicle) after the fabled Himalayan Abominable Snowman, but SUVs are no longer hot property in a depressed and more environmentally-aware market. You wonder too if it will find favour with the Czech marque's hitherto conservative customer base.

Besides, those needing a wheeled holdall were already catered for by the clever Roomster mini-MPV. It's cheaper, roughly the same length as its new sister and you can even buy the rugged Scout version, though it comes with front-wheel drive only.

But then Skoda expects most Yeti sales (from £13,775) to be the same format rather than the full 4x4 versions also available from £17,220.

And it reckons there are many Yeti conquest customers out there, particularly in the new 'crossover' sector identified by Nissan with the Qashqai, attracting new customers and transforming that marque's image at a stroke.

The five-door Yeti looks more upright than the Qashqai, but classy and robust and will sell

ROAD TEST SKODA YETI

BY STEVE LOADER

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Green rating	★★★★★

mostly with its mainstay VW diesel engines, though there is a 105bhp 1.2-litre petrol turbo with lots of urge and modest consumption.

The one to avoid is the 160bhp 1.8-litre petrol engine fitted to the 4x4 tested here; it's a great drive with plenty of go and refinement, but thirsty against the diesels.

It is hard to fault the Yeti otherwise.

As you would demand from a car that might go off-roading, the cabin never creaks of poor construction or quality.

It is nicely understated and typically well-organised with clever storage such as the collapsible boot bin. The cloth upholstery is a bit drab – leather seating is a tempting option – but ride and comfort is high.

Even rear seats rake for extra lounging appeal and all three can be tumbled, arranged or even removed individually for varied and ultimate load capacity.

The Yeti delivers excellent on-road composure too; from the high 'command' driving position you get a great view without the cornering lean suffered by many lofty vehicles.

So, the Qashqai faces its toughest competition yet and in a style that offers a genuine, certainly not abominable alternative.



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2004 SAAB 9-3 1.9TID Linear, 4 Doors, Manual, Diesel, 50,000 miles, Metallic Steel Grey, ABS, Air conditioning, Alarm, Alloy wheels, Cloth seat trim, Full Electric Pack, Full Service History, Park distance control, Traction control..... **£7,495**

2005 05 SAAB 9-3 1.8T Linear Sport, 4 Doors, Automatic, Saloon, Petrol, 63,277 miles, Metallic Grey, 2 Owners. Cruise control, Alloy wheels, Immobiliser, Multi function steering wheel, ABS, Cloth seat trim, Full Electric Pack, Reverse parking aid, Part Service History, Air conditioning, Climate Control, Park distance control..... **£7,295**

2002 52 SAAB 9-5 2.3HOT Aero, 4 Doors, Manual, Saloon, Petrol, 73,000 miles, Steel Grey, ABS, Alloy wheels, Full Electric Pack, Cruise control, Park distance control, Sports seats, Traction control, Climate control, In Car Entertainment, Warranty, Leather upholstery, Metallic paintwork, Tinted glass. **£5,495**

2001 Y SAAB 9-3 2.2 TID SE, 5 Doors, Manual, Hatchback, Diesel, 122,000 miles, Metallic blue, 2 Owners. Rear wiper, ABS, Air conditioning, Heated door mirrors, Alloy wheels, Cruise control, Folding rear seats, Immobiliser, Radio/CD, Rear headrests, Steering wheel reach adjustment, Front electric windows, Electric door mirrors, Rear electric windows, Audio remote control, Front head restraints, Front fog lights, Central locking, Passenger airbag, Remote central locking, Foglights, Drivers airbag, Trip computer, Full Service History, Alarm, Climate Control, Cloth upholstery, Headlight washers, Body coloured bumpers, Rear armrest, PAS, Child locks, Service indicator, Insurance Group: 12 **£3,295**

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USED CAR ROUND-UP: OUR PICK FROM A KEY SECTOR

FAMILY HATCHBACKS

WANT to downsize yet still run a car that does it all? Start shopping for a family hatchback; it seats five, can be crammed like a small van and represents a good balance of space, flexibility and economy... providing you don't go for the 'hot hatch' version. Competition is tough in this sector too, so there are few duds to beware of. Our trio here are affordable and should each give excellent service even if they offer differing propositions on street credibility – the Corolla was axed primarily for its dull image.

FORD FOCUS



BRITAIN'S favourite car. Or is it? Some say it's No1 through Ford's formidable market share. Fair point, but the Focus is also great to drive, practical, well-made and blessed with good engines. For second-hand buyers there is a fantastic choice of power – including the rapid ST – trim levels and body styles: a smart saloon and estate plus a coupe convertible. The car's popularity and ordinary looks are a weakness though and reason enough for some buyers to look elsewhere.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

TOYOTA COROLLA



TOYOTA chopped the Corolla in 2007 in favour of the Auris, but the latter has all the same virtues and disadvantages. More than any other model, the Corolla made Toyota the world's No1 carmaker – it was affordable and durable, but a little dull. There is plenty of engine and body choice though and even racy versions, though the car pretty much does what it says on the tin. Corolla prices have eased too with its perception as a 'deleted' model.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

MAZDA3



MAZDA'S link with Ford means that a lot of Focus resided beneath the skin of the first and newly-replaced Mazda3 and that means neat handling. But the Mazda stands out visually from its ubiquitous half-sister, a fact not lost on used car buyers looking for something distinctive. The '3' is mostly found as a capacious hatchback, but there is also a sporty saloon. Engines are lively, in line with Mazda's sporty 'Zoom-Zoom' image – look out for the MPS hot hatch.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

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TECHNICIAN REQUIRED (FULLY SKILLED) Based in Maidstone

Whitehouse Maidstone is looking for a fully skilled technician preferably with Chrysler Jeep or Hyundai experience.

Salary is negotiable with on target bonus offered together with 22 days holiday per annum.

To apply or for more information call Dennis Crighton on 01622 686864 or send your CV to Whitehouse Maidstone, 1-17 The Broadway, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8QX.

EXPERIENCE CAR SALES EXECUTIVE

Based in Maidstone

Whitehouse Maidstone Chrysler Jeep and Hyundai dealership, is looking for an experienced car sales executive with proven track record in the motor trade.

A competitive salary is offered together with on target bonus, company vehicle and 22 days holiday per annum.

To apply or for more information call **Mark Wood** on markwood@whitehousegroup.co.uk or send your CV to **Whitehouse Maidstone, 1-17 The Broadway, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8QX**

New Year, New Challenge

MidKent College have exciting one year secondment opportunities for the following positions:

Assistant Principal (£63K) negotiable subject to experience.

Head of Faculty (£46K) negotiable subject to experience.

Teacher Coach (£33K) negotiable subject to experience.

MidKent College is a large, successful FE College operating on two main campuses in Medway and Maidstone. Our state of the art, £86 million Medway campus is next door to the Royal School of Military Engineering where the College is training all their soldiers in Construction & Engineering under a 30-year contract.

Our recent OFSTED Inspection described the College as 'good' overall with 'outstanding' capacity to improve. We would like to accelerate our improvement agenda by seconding individuals who will relish the chance to undertake a specific improvement project within the College in areas such as A levels, Skills for Life, Construction, Engineering, Teaching and Learning. Whether you are already in FE, working in a school or Sixth Form College, or working elsewhere in education, this is an ideal opportunity to develop your skills in a supportive environment working alongside some high quality senior leaders.

We particularly welcome applications from underrepresented groups and will meet reasonable living expenses for staff who live outside the area.

The roles above are the indicative levels that we seek secondments at. There is, however, some scope for flexibility for high calibre individuals who can help us on our journey to be "outstanding"!

If you are interested in knowing more please contact our retained consultant Ken Pullan on 07725 128661 or by email ken.pullan@midkent.ac.uk



MidKent College

MidKent College is an equal opportunities employer

A great future. Right on your doorstep.

SALES & CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENTS OPEN DAY

Wednesday 27 January • 4.30pm – 6.30pm
At Cheriton Parc House, High Street, Cheriton, Folkestone CT18 8AN

Here at Direct Choice, we're the growing business that delivers great value insurance products over the phone and online. Having been in the area for six months now, we're going from strength to strength and have some terrific career opportunities.

For our team, success is all about delighting our customers. Listening to them, understanding what they need and providing a brilliant service. If that sounds like your kind of company, then come along to our **open day**. Find out how you could help us build the future of our new contact centre at the former Eurotunnel offices just off the M20 in Cheriton, 20 minutes from Ashford.

For both roles, there will be full training, not to mention ongoing support every step of the way. So while contact centre experience would be ideal, it's certainly not essential if you've excellent communication skills and a helpful personality. As part of the Acromas family – that also includes Saga and The AA – we offer a basic salary plus uncapped commission, outstanding opportunities for career progression and a first-rate benefits package.

If you can't make the open day, we'd still like to hear from you. To apply for either of the positions, call 01303 774888 for an application form and post to Roisin McCrudden, HR Officer, Direct Choice, Enbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE. Alternatively, email your CV to recruitment@directchoice.co.uk. Please quote reference DC361/KOS.

www.directchoice.com



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New Year, New Challenge!
We are seeking an
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ideally with sales, lettings, secretarial and accounting experience.
F/T or P/T to be discussed. Full ongoing training will be given.
Send your CV by the 1st February 2010 to:
Family Homes
33 Northwood Drive, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4QS
or email to sunil.papat@virgin.net

Raising Your Game - Big Lottery 5 year project

Raising Your Game is a £4.9 million Lottery-Funded project delivered in partnership by Mencap, Nacro and Ican and will run between November 2009 and November 2014. It will be delivered in six pilot areas across England, including East Kent, and will work with all young people with learning disabilities between the ages of 14 and 25, including those who are at risk of, or are, currently offending to develop innovative ways of fully participating in their lives and services.

The post will be based in East Kent.

Regional Co-ordinator (37.5 hours) £27,403

Actively helping young people work towards achieving their full potential you will work proactively with Nacro and one of our five other regional partners. You will also work alongside a young person appointed as Regional Learning Disability Consultant to the project.

You will:

- Develop and implement young peoples' participation standards across each region in years one and two;
- Identify and develop placement opportunities' and from the end of year two go on to place young people with a learning disability who are at risk of offending or who have offended.
- Identify and help organise opportunities for the young people involved to extend their skills and build upon their confidence, and so help diminish the likelihood of offending.

Regional Learning Disability Consultant (16 hours) £17,727 pro rata

Having first-hand experience of what it is like to have a learning disability, you will support the Regional Coordinator to make information easy to understand, give presentations at conferences and events and give training to different groups. You will use your advocacy skills to tell people about the project and the needs of young people with a learning disability.

Equal Opportunities

Mencap aims to ensure that our jobs are open and accessible to all regardless of their gender, race, religion, sexuality, age or any other factor which might incur discrimination.

Applicants with disabilities

We are particularly keen in Mencap to promote the employment of people with a disability. Mencap will select for interview all applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for the job.

Appointments are subject to Mencap receiving an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau which we consider appropriate

Closing Date 4th February 2010

Interviews scheduled 15th& 16th February 2010



For further information and to apply please visit our website at www.mencap.org.uk, email us at Recruitment.CommunityAction@mencap.org.uk

The above posts are funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund



Thanet is a beautiful place to work



Thanet is a great place to live and work. Our historic seaside towns of Ramsgate, Margate and Broadstairs are rich in heritage and opportunity. From the multi-million pound Turner Contemporary Gallery, the fast speed rail link to London, and the popular Westwood Cross shopping centre - this is an exciting time to join Thanet District Council. We are determined to improve the quality of life for local people. We believe that by listening to local people, working in active partnership and by being prepared to do things in an innovative way we can accelerate improvement and best meet the challenges ahead.

Committee Services Manager

Salary £29,895 to £35,007 per annum

Under the guidance of the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, this post will be responsible for managing a small team of officers providing committee and scrutiny services, and will contribute to relevant projects, such as the updating of the Council's constitution and the development of a Member learning & development strategy. Applicants need to be educated to degree level and have considerable experience of committee and scrutiny services, including management experience.

Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

Salary £26,940 to £30,738 per annum

This post provides an exciting opportunity for someone with an interest in policy review, because roughly half of the time the post holder will support the Council's overview and scrutiny function. That involves bringing together the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel investigating local issues, the Cabinet Members that take the decisions and the Directors that advise them. A mature approach to undertaking the work is essential, to ensure the scrutiny role adds value to the Council's achievements. The remainder of the time the post holder will provide more general support to some of the Council's other committees, arranging and attending meetings, and taking minutes. Applicants need to be educated to degree level or equivalent.

The closing date for both positions is: Friday 12 February 2010

Interviews will be held: Tuesday 2 or Wednesday 3 March 2010

For an informal discussion about both positions, please contact Glenn Back on 01843 577187

All posts include generous annual leave, flexible working, a 37-hour week, subsidised bus pass, as well as access to the local government final salary pension scheme.

For an application form and job description for this position, please contact the Human Resources Department on (01843) 577175 (24 hours), e-mail jobs.hrpartnership@dovery.gov.uk or, download an application form from www.thanet.gov.uk/jobs. Applications to be returned to: East Kent H R Partnership, Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover CT16 3PJ

Thanet District Council is an equal opportunities employer committed to employing people with disabilities. Any disabled applicant who meets the minimum criteria for the posts will be guaranteed an interview.



Account Manager

ASHFORD • £GOOD REMUNERATION

Exciting developments within KOS Media Group has created the need to appoint a polished sales professional.

KOS Media Group has been one of the fastest growing independent regional media companies over the last seven years. Its newspapers have won more than ten national awards during that time, including UK Local Newspaper of the Year seven times. Our aim is to truly reflect the important events happening within our region via a combination of quality county newspapers, editorially-led local, midweek newspapers and the page turning editions as well as community websites and online local TV.

A new account manager is required to play a key role developing new business and maintaining existing relationships. The ideal candidate should be comfortable with all stages of account management and should

be proficient at sourcing leads, creating initial contact, delivering presentations, writing proposals, negotiating and closing.

The person we are seeking will be an energetic and enthusiastic individual with good interpersonal skills, strong relationship-building capability and have excellent verbal and written communication ability. They will need to demonstrate a proven sales track record, preferably from within media, will have a good understanding of the benefits of printed, online and live media and ideally knowledge of the Kent marketplace.

KOS Media offers a good basic salary, alongside performance and target-related bonus, plus five weeks annual holiday.

If you believe you are a polished professional sales person looking for a challenging role, please submit your CV to Head of Department
christine.davidson@kosmedia.co.uk



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Want to be the best and be rewarded for it?
Have a genuine interest in cars and customer service?
Experience is preferred but not essential as full training will be given.

Interested?

Please forward your C.V. and covering letter to
Nicky Simmons, Head of H.R. Waters AutoPlanet, Bircholt Road,
Parkwood, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9XY or email:
nsimmons@argltd.co.uk Full UK driving licence essential.

All applications are treated in the strictest of confidence. We are an equal opportunities employer.





Valence School

KEYWORKER

FULL TIME – Working Term Time Only

This post involves shift work and to have responsibility for and work to promote all aspects of personal development and individual progress for a group of Key Students.
Kent Scheme Band 5

£16,793 to £18,471 full time equivalent

STUDENT SUPPORT ASSISTANT

Full Time and Part Time hours available, Term Time Only.

This post involves shift work in supporting students with all their needs throughout their waking day, both within and outside the classroom.
Kent Scheme Band 3 (pro-rata)

£14,099 to £15,984 full time equivalent

WAKING NIGHT STUDENT SUPPORT ASSISTANT

Shifts are 10 p.m. until 8 a.m. Term Time Only.

This post involves working waking nights, and supporting students with their personal care needs over the night. There are a number of nights available.
Kent Scheme Band 3 (pro-rata)

£14,099 - £15,984 full time equivalent plus unsocial hours allowance

Valence School is a Kent County Council all age residential school for children and young people with physical disabilities, complex medical needs and associated learning and communication difficulties.

Valence School is committed to safeguarding and promoting every student's welfare. We expect all staff to share our commitment. The successful applicants will require an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Check.

For further information and an application form, please contact Staff Services Department. Please note the closing date for applications is Friday 22nd January 2010 at 4pm.

Valence School, Westerham, Kent TN16 1QN

Tel:- 07887 727182 Fax: 01959-565046

e-mail: vacancies@valence.kent.sch.uk

Quex House & Gardens
The Powell-Cotton Museum
Quex Garden Restaurant
Banqueting Facility

Due to restructuring of our restaurant facilities we now have vacancies for

Front of House Supervisor and Assistant
Sous Chef

For an application form please apply to:-
Mr M P Harman, Managing Director,
QME Limited Powell-Cotton Museum,
Quex Park, Birchington, Kent, CT7 0BH enquiries@quexmuseum.org
or call: 01843 842 168

deadline: 25/02/2010

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Contact Claire on
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Please apply in writing to Ron Twyman,
Planning Manager, Piper Double Glazing Limited,
140 Newington Road, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6PP
or by e-mail to ron@piperwindows.co.uk

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ME10 1JB
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The Spencer Wing is the independently owned and managed 22 bed private hospital situated on the QEOM Hospital site. We also have a 5 bed unit at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. The continuing growth of our business has resulted in a vacancy for the following staff:

ENDOSCOPY SISTER – (Margate)
25 hrs per week
Previous applicants for the above post need not apply.

Dual Trained Nurse (Margate)
30 hrs per week

Paediatric Nurses (Margate/Ashford)
Flexi Bank

To discuss these opportunities or to arrange an informal visit, please contact:
Vicky Smith or Mary Guarnieri - 01843 234555 Ext: 62207 (Margate)
Debbie Burr – 01233 616202 (Ashford)

For job description and application form please contact:
Jo Edwards
East Kent Medical Services Ltd
The Spencer Wing, QEOM Hospital, Ramsgate Road, Margate, Kent CT9 4BG
Telephone: 01843 234556 Fax: 01843 296333
E-mail: mandy.oliver@thespencerwing.com

The Spencer Wing is an equal opportunity employer
These positions are subject to a
Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure check

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Nursery Officer Ref: CA0925L
Grade D1 Salary: £12,787 - £16,440 per annum
Hours: 37 hours per week, working a shift pattern

Our full daycare nursery is looking for another member of staff to join its busy team, working with babies and children under the age of three years. If you have an early years qualification, (minimum level 2), post qualifying experience and a passion for providing the highest quality care and education for young children then we would like to hear from you.

Café Worker Ref: CA0926L
(maternity cover for approximately 6-9 months)
Grade D1 Salary: £12,787 - £16,440 per annum
Hours: 37 hours per week

As café worker you will be involved with the day-to-day running of the café including preparing and cooking food, menu planning and preparing meals for children in our full daycare nursery as well as assisting in making the community café a focus for our community. You will be enthusiastic, passionate about food and nutrition, confident, innovative and customer focused with experience of a fast moving catering environment.

Any offer of employment for these posts will be subject to a Criminal Records Bureau Enhanced Disclosure.

For further information or an informal discussion please contact the centre on 01634 338833.

Closing date for both posts: Friday, 29 January 2010

For an application pack or to apply visit www.medway.gov.uk
or phone 01634 333333 Mon to Fri 8am – 8pm, Sat 9am – 1pm or 01634 332843
24-hour answerphone. Alternatively email: jobs@medway.gov.uk quoting the reference.

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We deliver high quality locally sourced food across Kent and London and require a dynamic professional to help our business grow to the next stage.

The successful candidate will play a key role in coordinating and delivering the marketing strategy, managing online content, customer communication and analysis.

The ideal candidate will ideally have:-

- 1 years marketing experience
- Excellent communication skills
- A high level of computer literacy

This really is an exciting time to join a progressive, forward thinking company.
Apply now in writing to info@foodforkent.co.uk

Closing date for applications 30st January 2009.

PART-TIME BOOKKEEPER
Conversant with duties of Company Secretary

Part-time bookkeeper required for family business and Charitable Foundation. We have an extensive property portfolio in South East England and France, and the Foundation also runs a large community Art Centre in Chatham.

The successful applicant will be a confident, self-motivated and experienced person able to produce forecasts as required, quarterly financial reports, draft year end accounts to enable Accountants to prepare year end Tax Returns, Annual Returns for Companies House and the Charity Commission, payroll, profit and loss, etc. A good working knowledge of Sage accounts software essential. Car driver preferred as you will be required to work in two offices. 24 hours pw over 4 days. Able to commence work February 2010.

Tel: 01634 819618 Fax: 01634 827405 or e.mail carol@halpernpropertiesltd.com

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Contact Ann Noble to visit.

Further details / forms from career opportunities link on website: www.themallingschool.kent.sch.uk

Applications to Elaine Greenwood
elaine.greenwood@mhffederation.co.uk
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OUT OF LUCK: Benn Barham missed out on making his third consecutive cut by one shot at the Joburg Open

Barham slips up on back nine to miss cut

GOLF

BENN Barham's impressive start to the European Tour season came to a halt after he missed the cut by a single shot at the Joburg Open.

The 34-year-old, who lost his tour card last season, was taking part in his third invite of the season and headed into the event in good form after securing tied 13th place at the Africa Open earlier this month.

The Tenterden golfer made a promising start to the competition after carding three consecutive birdies on the front nine. However, an inconsistent

back nine thwarted his chances of carding a low score.

Three bogeys in the first five holes left him needing a recovery and his round was made worse by a triple bogey on the 17th hole. Despite the disappointing finish, Barham returned to the clubhouse with a one-over-par 72.

After a number of low-scoring rounds by the majority of the 200-plus field, Barham needed an impressive second

round to stand any chance of making the cut and competing for a good finish over the weekend.

He began with a solid front nine, which saw him enter the turn at one under after a birdie at the ninth. Once again the back nine caused the Chart Hills professional problems, with a crucial bogey at the 14th.

Despite hitting three birdies, the dropped shot cost Barham his place for the final two rounds, as his three-under-par round of 68 saw him finish in tied 78th place and one shot adrift of the cut.

RUGBY



RARING TO GO: Ashford are desperate to play rugby again after two consecutive postponements

Ashford hungry for a return to action

AFTER two consecutive postponements Ashford's players are hungrier than ever to return to Kent 1 action and move up the table.

Dai Fussell's side, who are in ninth place, have been out of action since January 2, when they were soundly beaten 41-5 by high-flying Cranbrook.

Since then, games against Sheppey and the trip to Vigo on Saturday have been called off due to the snow and freezing temperatures.

Despite the snow and wintry weather wiping out the majority of the rugby schedule, Ashford have continued to train.

Fussell's squad have taken part in a number of gym sessions and the Ashford coach is looking forward to when his side can take to the field again.

Favour

He said: "It's not affected us too bad, we have been able to train at the gym."

"We've kept the squad together and have managed to do some sessions so the players can get rid of all the Christmas pudding they have indulged in over the holidays."

"Obviously it is a worry not playing games for such a long time, but it can also work in our favour."

"As we have not played for a while the players are becoming hungry to get out there and much more passionate about games. Hopefully we can build on this when we return to the field."

The club are confident they will host this Saturday's game against Erith barring any further snowfall this week.

Erith are one place below Ashford in Kent 1 and the game could go some way in deciding who will be involved in a relegation scrap come the end of the season.

ATHLETICS

■ BY TOM HOWARD

SECURITY fears ahead of this year's Commonwealth Games in India have left Lisa Dobriskey in two minds about defending her 1500-metre title.

England are due to send a full squad to the games held in Delhi in October, but that has been thrown into doubt due to security concerns after terrorist attacks in Mumbai and Lahore in the last two years.

Dobriskey, the world silver medallist from Ashford, who began her season with a 12th-place finish at the Great Edinburgh cross-country earlier this month, wants to defend the title she won in Melbourne in 2006, but told Yourashford that security fears have put that in doubt, although it is not the only reason why she may not compete.

She said: "Obviously being the reigning champion there is an added reason for me to go and defend my title. I would love to make the trip to India, but it is not really up to me. I will leave that to the officials; if they say it is safe then I will go."

"Also it will depend on my fitness at the end of the year, so if I don't feel up to it I won't make the trip."

If Dobriskey stays home – and she isn't the only one to express doubts about sprinter Marlon Devonish and hurdler Andy Turner both said they had reservations – it's still going to be a big year for the Kent athlete.

Expectation

Her first target is to remain injury free, a problem that plagued her last year, and then to launch a medal bid at July's European Championships in Barcelona.

She is also planning a tilt at the World Indoor Championships at Doha, Qatar in March.

After ending 2009 by producing a career-best time of 3:59:50 at the Golden League meeting in Switzerland, perilously close to Kelly Holmes' British record, Dobriskey believes she is entering the next stage of her running career.

She said: "Things have certainly changed for me now. I'm not an up-and-coming athlete anymore and there is a lot of expectation surrounding me on the track. I feel now that I have to perform in every race and when I do have a bad race it will not go unnoticed like before."

"Injuries were such a pain last season and I seem to keep picking them up, so to have a year without injury would be high on my list."

"Probably the biggest event for me is the European Championships. I'd love to medal there and a gold would be great, but I've learnt now that after the injuries of last year, nothing is certain in this sport."

Dobriskey will begin her indoor season later this month in the Aviva International match at Glasgow on January 30.

• Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk



Picture: ADY KERRY

UNSURE: Lisa Dobriskey is unable to confirm if she will defend her Commonwealth 1500m title in India this year

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Treddy Test debut likely as England call up Kent pair

CRICKET

BY GLENN PEARSON

KENT duo James Tredwell and Joe Denly have both been selected for the England tour to the United Arab Emirates and Bangladesh.

Off-spinner Tredwell has also been named in the 16-man Test squad, but Denly misses out with the England selectors instead opting to call-up former Kent batsman Michael Carberry as a replacement for captain Andrew Strauss, who is sitting the series out.

For Tredwell, however, his inclusion in the Test squad for the two-match series against Bangladesh heralds an excellent opportunity to make his debut, as England are widely expected to include two spinners in their bowling attack. With leg-spinner Adil Rashid missing from the squad, it's likely England will partner Tredwell with frontline spinner Graeme Swann for the series.

Tredwell, who was called up as back-up to Swann for the drawn series in South Africa, said: "I'm delighted to be going to Bangladesh with England. I thoroughly enjoyed the trip to South Africa but going to Bangladesh may give me a better chance of getting a game because conditions might suit playing two spinners. We have a strong squad and I'm very much looking forward to my first tour to Bangladesh."

Denly, 23, is part of the squad for the first leg



PICKED: Kent spinner James Tredwell and batsman Joe Denly have both been named for England's tour of the UAE

of the tour which sees England play three One-Day Internationals against Bangladesh at the end of February.

After a mixed start to his international career, the series will provide the Whitstable-born batsman with a chance to cement his place in the side.

He said: "I'm delighted to be back in the England squad. I'm pleased with being selected and cannot wait to get back out there with my international team-mates. It will be good to have James (Tredwell) out there and I'm sure the tour will go well for both me and England."

Elsewhere at the club, an advert has now been placed in the national press for the post of chief executive at St Lawrence.

An advert was placed in the Sunday Times newspaper at the weekend as the club look for a full-time replacement for Paul Millman, who left the county more than six weeks ago.

Chairman George Kennedy, who has placed Jamie Clifford as acting chief executive while the club look to fill the position, said the club had already received three or four "high-class" applications that would be taken seriously.

He said: "We have had two or three applicants with county experience, although they are not necessarily still with a county, and one with an international flavour, which is interesting."

The club hope to have their man in place before the start of the cricket season, with Clifford thought to be the favourite to take over full-time.

FOOTBALL



FIT AGAIN: Paul Jones is expected to return after recovering from a groin injury

Lovell delight as players return after time out

ASHFORD Town will be almost back to full strength when they return to Ryman South action at Whyteleafe on Saturday.

Steve Lovell's side have been hit hard by the big freeze, playing just once in the last six weeks. However, the postponements have allowed Town's lengthy injury list to shorten and only Toby Ashmore remains on the sidelines with a broken metatarsal.

The trip to 14th-placed Whyteleafe will see the return of strikers Joe Fuller and Paul Jones to the squad after lengthy spells on the sidelines, along with defender Lee Hockey and goalkeeper Scott Chalmers-Stevens.

Town, who are facing a fixture-packed January and February due to several postponements, are desperate to pick up points and move away from the relegation zone. Lovell's side picked up their first win of the season against Whyteleafe in September, but he says that won't count for anything.

"We're almost back to full strength, which is great news," he said. "To have Paul and Joe back is a blessing, as Mark has been the only recognised forward for the majority of the season."

"We just want to play games so it doesn't really matter who we're facing. Obviously we got a win against them earlier in the season, but it won't mean anything when we play on Saturday."

The club have also re-signed goalkeeper Josh Willis from Ryman Premier League side Hastings United. Willis joined Town last season from Ryman South rivals Sittingbourne, but left the Homelands club during last summer.

Ashford Town were due to play VCD in the Kent Senior Cup last night. Log on to www.yourashford.co.uk for a full report.

LEAGUE TABLE

(Not including midweek games)

RYMAN DIVISION ONE SOUTH

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Folkestone Invicta	21	15	5	1	+19	50
2 Worthing	22	14	1	7	+17	43
3 Godalming Town	20	12	3	5	+15	39
4 Walton & Hersham	21	11	4	6	+7	37
5 Croydon Athletic	19	10	6	3	+21	36
6 Fleet Town	20	10	3	7	+11	33
7 Chatham Town	23	10	3	10	-5	33
8 Ramsgate	21	9	5	7	+5	32
9 Merstham	22	9	5	8	-2	32
10 Dulwich Hamlet	21	7	8	6	+2	29
11 Sittingbourne	18	8	4	6	+7	28
12 Burgess Hill Town	19	8	4	7	+2	28
13 Corinthian-Casuals	21	8	3	10	-3	27
14 Whyteleafe	21	8	2	11	+2	26
15 Leatherhead	18	7	3	8	+4	24
16 Horsham YMCA	22	5	9	8	-4	24
17 Metropolitan Police	20	5	7	8	+3	22
18 Walton Casuals	20	6	4	10	-7	22
19 Chipstead	22	5	5	12	-14	20
20 Whitstable Town	21	5	2	14	-27	17
21 Eastbourne Town	22	3	7	12	-23	16
22 Ashford Town	18	2	5	11	-30	11

FIXTURES Ryman Division One South (Saturday):

Whyteleafe v Ashford Town



EDGING CLOSER: Bromley Green (in green) are within striking distance of league leaders Market Hotel

Draw keeps Green off top spot

SUNDAY LEAGUE

BROMLEY Green missed out on a chance to top the Premier Division after being held to a 1-1 draw by Kennington in the Ashford Sunday League.

With the thaw from the heavy snowfall to hit the Ashford area coming too late, only three games went ahead as the fixture schedule was hit hard once again.

In the only game in the Premier Division, Bromley Green's Robbie Greenfield gave the title challengers the lead against Kennington early in the first-half, but were unable to see the game out and conceded a Jazz Field equaliser.

The point for Kennington means they remain in sixth place, while Bromley Green are just a point behind leaders Market Hotel.

In the Kent Sunday Junior Trophy, Marsh Athletic edged out Newchurch 4-3 in a seven-goal thriller. Marsh started brightly and soon moved into a 3-0 lead, courtesy of goals from Tom Brudenhall, Adam Washford and Jim Haylett.

However, Newchurch launched a stunning fight-back in the second-half and forced the game into extra-time, with strikes from Lee Jackman and a brace from Greg Hitchman. Marsh held their nerve in extra-time and secured a 4-3 win, with Alan Serling netting the winner.

William Harvey Inn moved into the quarter-finals of the Sheber Trophy following a 4-0 win at Troggs reserves. Joe Ansell and Keith Matthews gave the visitors a 2-0 lead before the break and the victory was secured by Ansell, who completed his hat-trick.

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